AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE COMPOSING PROCESSES
AND GRAPHIC LINGUISTIC AWARENESS
OF THREE VERY YOUNG CHILDREN

BY

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This dissertation is dedicated

to the children of the study,

Terry, Laurel, and Amy

who taught, that I might teach.

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This study consisted of an investigation into the

composing (dictating/writing/drawing) processes of 3

children ages 2, 3, and 4 at the onset, and the graphic

linguistic awareness evidenced as these children generated

their own graphic representation. Sixteen structured

composing episodes were conducted over a 6 month period,

in which the children composed as a group with a respon-

sive adult. Research methodology employed in the study

was eclectic in design, involving case study, observa-

tional, and ethnographic techniques. Videotapes of the

16 sessions were transcribed and analyzed by 2 coders to

describe children's composing processes and to graph and

to analyze their graphic linguistic awareness and the

nature and functions of their oral interaction while

composing.

The unique contribution of this study to research in the area of composing was the development of a research methodology for obtaining and analyzing data on the composing processes of children ages 2-4. Previous research has not studied children so young and appropriate research methodologies had not been developed. The group setting, together with the composing tasks and adult direction, resulted in lengthy sessions (35 to 80 minutes) of active composing. Other researchers have studied children individually. For the 3 children in this study, the group sessions were productive research environments.

Secondarily, it was observed that the children participated more actively in the composing process when the activities were personal, purposeful, and communication for an immediate audience (personal letters and greeting cards) than when the audience was less well defined (group books).

The primary contribution of this study to the research literature in language awareness was likewise the development of a research setting and methodology conducive to ascertaining the graphic linguistic awareness of children ages 2-4. The term graphic linguistic awareness was identified by this study to represent that component of metalinguistic awareness which focuses on graphic representation and its meaning.

The study further contributes an operational defini-
tion of graphic linguistic awareness which emerged from
observations of the 3 children as they composed. This
study has operationally defined graphic linguistic aware-
ness to include letter awareness, word awareness, spelling
awareness, and print awareness.

In the area of graphic linguistic awareness, some of
the findings might have been anticipated, i.e., that
children would be fascinated with each other's names.
The quantity of graphic linguistic awareness displayed
was an unexpected finding, as were the many diverse ways
in which the awareness was demonstrated.

This study raised questions about viewing the com-
posing process for young children as solitary and silent
and demonstrated the usefulness of the children's oral
interactions both for gathering data about graphic
linguistic awareness and for enhancing the composing
processes themselves. A schema of the functions of oral
interaction while composing was developed.

Research in composing might utilize the group setting
and composing strategies developed for this study. Re-
searchers might investigate the impact of an immediate
audience and of purposeful, meaningful communication on
the composing processes of children ages 2-4.

The term graphic linguistic awareness provides
clarity to researchers. The operational definition offers

a framework around which future studies might be designed. The amount of graphic linguistic awareness already obtained by the children in this study was substantial, indicating a need to explore the origins of graphic linguistic awareness with even younger children.

This investigation gives guidance to researchers in the areas of early childhood composing and linguistic awareness. It provides a theoretical construct around which an early childhood writing curriculum might be developed and researched. Many questions were generated which provide direction for future research in these areas.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Research into the field of writing is shifting in
focus from an evaluation of product to an investigation of
process (Vukelich & Golden, 1981). Studies by Emig (1969)
with 12th grade children, and Graves (1977, 1978) with five
and seven year olds have opened the door to research on the
writing process and have introduced alternative orienta-
tions and methodology. A natural extension of their
efforts was to research the very beginning of composing
(writing/drawing) in younger children (ages 2-4).

Children of these ages are also beginning to try to
make sense of the world of print which surrounds them (Clay,
1975). This emerging process may be termed graphic
linguistic awareness, i.e., an awareness of the printed
word or the symbols used in writing or printing to convey
meaning. Studies involving this area of research have
recorded children's linguistic awareness in response to
reading activities (Downing, 1970b; Holden & MacGinitie,
1972) or in response to print not of their own generation
(Harste, Burke & Woodward, 1979). Research which would
investigate the evidence of graphic linguistic awareness
manifested by children as they are composing (writing/
drawing) was needed. Children's generation of their own

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graphic representations served as a useful tool for the revelation of graphic linguistic awareness.

Numerous studies have been published within the last decade focusing on reading (and prereading) skills and language development. Most currently "metalinguistic awareness"--an awareness of the nature of one's own language--predominates as a topic of research in the area of early childhood education. This awareness includes knowing what reading and language are; what a letter, word, sentence and story are; and what the conventions of print are (such as left to right and top to bottom pro-gression, word boundaries, etc.) (Weaver & Shonkoff, 1978). This awareness has also been termed "linguistic accessi-bility" (Klima in Cazden, 1974) and the ability to "manipulate language as an object" (Ehri, 1975).

Pertinent studies consistently demonstrate that young children ages 2-4 have a vague and confusing aware-ness of the terms typically used in conjunction with interaction with print, such as sentence, word, sound, letter, etc. (Clay, 1975; Downing, 1970a; Johns, 1977; Reid, 1966). Practically all of the research in this area has concentrated on studies of oral language and reading. Writing, or the generation of one's own graphic symbols, is rarely the focus of research in preschool age children and seldom is the vehicle for assessing linguistic awareness at any level.

Although the areas of reading, speaking and writing have been demonstrated consistently to be highly inter-related (Gibson & Levin, 1975; Mason, 1980; Page, 1974; Reid, 1966), Stanley and Pershin (1978) state that writing has long been considered a "secondary system" to speech and reading. Studies that have been conducted have been almost exclusively concerned with the product of the children's efforts. Writing process research is "virgin territory" (Graves, 1979b).

For some reason long obscured, the child has "little motivation to learn writing when we begin to teach it and has only a vague idea of its usefulness" (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 99). Yet research has clearly demonstrated that between 3 and 5 years of age most children in a literate society express an interest in writing (Hall, Moretz & Statom, 1976), and become aware that "people make marks on paper purposefully" (Clay, 1977). This expressed interest in writing appears to correspond roughly with a child's beginning interest in reading and with an increase in his/her verbal development. Oral and written language, in fact, appear to have parallel development (Harste et al., 1979).

Evidence is now being submitted to support the theory that written language develops naturally just as oral language does (Goodman & Goodman, 1981), and growth in one area of communication enhances the development of

another (Harste et al., 1979; Klein, 1981). In fact, studies show that children acquire skills in reading and writing, just as they do in speaking and listening, at a very young age (Doake, 1979b). Mattingly (1972) hypothesizes that the wider the gap in time between a child's major acquisition of speech skills and the literacy skills of reading and writing, the greater will be the child's "cognitive confusion" and the harder it will be to learn to read and write.

Traditionally, the processes of writing and reading have been researched separately, as if each were an entity unto itself. Development in writing, however, has been demonstrated to be closely related to development in reading (Luria, in Clay, 1977; Hall et al., 1976; Harste et al., 1979). Early readers studied by Durkin (1966) and Clark (1975) were termed "pencil and paper kids" by their parents, and the initial indication of curiosity about written language was an interest in scribbling and drawing (Durkin, 1966, p. 137). Ferguson (1975) found children's ability to write their name at the beginning of kinder-garten to be a predictor of later reading ability.

Serious questions must be raised about the prevailing notion that the sequence of language learning is listening, speaking, reading, and then writing (Hall et al., 1976). Indeed, it would seem that research in prereading mandates simultaneous research in prewriting, as both are forms of

language processing (Page, 1974). Further, it would seem that the interrelationships among all forms of written language should be the focal point of study rather than the segmentation and polarization thereof. Communication is, after all, the intent of writer, reader, and speaker (Gillooly, 1973; Page, 1974).

Instruction in writing, commonly practiced as though it were synonomous with handwriting (Whiteman, 1980), is one of the most rigid areas in the early childhood curriculum. Children are typically forced to copy, trace, and stay within lines. The products of their labors are very technically evaluated, even in the preschool. Yet, research has shown that direct instruction is of limited use at a young age (Hildreth, 1936) and that exploration and trial-and-error by the child are most beneficial (Clay, 1977). Demands for accuracy and perfection actually hinder instruction in writing (Goodman & Goodman, 1981). Unstructured composing (drawing and writing) or precomposing activities (consisting of scribbles, drawing and emerging graphic symbols) are a foundation upon which instruction may be based. Zepeda de Kane (1980) cites children communicating graphically as "building bridges of meaning as they drew" (p. iv). It has been demonstrated that writing emerges from drawing, without direct instruction (Ames & Ilg, 1951; Wheeler, 1971) and, further, that children's drawings become the basis of written communication (Lamme, 1981). In fact, these composing behaviors

may even serve as organizers of reading behaviors (Clay, 1975). The removal of rigidity and preoccupation with product may tend to encourage more positive writing experiences and more enjoyment.

Composing activities are seldom presented that provide young children the opportunity to see that their own efforts have meaning--that their writing/drawing is purposeful and can communicate. As Bruner (1971, p. 113) states

> There is a very crucial matter about acquiring a skill--be it chess, political savvy, biology, or skiing. The goal must be plain, one must have a sense of where one is trying to get to in any given instance of activity.

This aspect appears to have been ignored in the area of prewriting instruction. Drawing sticks, circles, and lollipops are merely an exercise. Communication is a necessary prerequisite of learning to write (DeFord, 1980). Writing has a purpose, so writing (and prewriting) education must "suit the child's real purpose of communication from the beginning" (Hildreth, 1964, p. 19).

Statement of the Problem

Research into children's composing processes demonstrates the need for an investigation of the composing processes of children prior to school age. In this study the researcher attempted to describe the composing processes of 3 very young children as they communicated through dictating, writing, and drawing. At each

session children were given an opportunity to dictate or
write a message for real communication (such as a greeting
card, letter, placecard for a table, or a book). The
children then completed their messages by drawing and/or
writing.

Research in the area of metalinguistic awareness has
focused on asking children direct questions about print not
of their own generation. Such direct metalinguistic ques-
tions may be inappropriate for very young children (Sulzby,
1979). This study used the composing processes as sources
for information about children's graphic linguistic aware-
ness. The environment for the investigation was much like
one that could exist in a preschool situation--a group of
3 . children interacting with a responsive adult.

Need for the Study

The proposed study addressed the call for composing
process research (Graves, 1981). Typically, evaluation
and discussion have centered on an examination of the final
effort without specific inquiry into the operations per-
formed within the composing process itself. This type of
research has proved unsatisfactory (Applebee, 1981). The
products of very young children often reveal layers of
work which are later covered up by additional graphic
symbols (Lamme, 1981). Also, in the examination of the
product only, any verbalization or "composing aloud"

(Emig, 1977) that accompanies the process of composing is lost. Drawing/writing can provide situations in which the researcher observes the ways in which a child "organizes his behavior" (Clay, 1975) verbally and physically. Sulzby (1979) claims that both the direct metalinguistic question and the indirect metalinguistic question are important in research investigations. The indirect metalinguistic question is defined as "giving a child something to do and then observing what happens" (p. 3). It was the contention of this investigator that it is the indirect graphic linguistic question that is of primary concern; for questioning a very young child directly may result in misleading information or no information at all (Sulzby, 1979).

The researcher, also, through detailed descriptions of the young child's composing episodes could provide needed information to educators and parents about learning to write and learning to read (Hall et al., 1976). Indepth studies of children while they are writing is of prime importance (Graves, 1981) in order to provide the data needed to begin the development of a theory of writing (King & Rentel, 1979). It is probable that the first pre-writing steps in composing (drawing/writing) and the accompanying verbal expressions have been ignored because there is not, as yet, a theoretical base upon which to make "formulations and predictions" (King & Rentel, 1979).

The emphasis in the schools has typically been formal instruction in reading and listening (passive), while a knowledge of child development indicates that stressing talking and writing (active) would be preferable in enhancing all communication skills (Emig, 1977). This study sought to take advantage of the links between these active communication processes. First, the researcher examined the process of writing--how very young children go about composing. This was accomplished by placing children in a particular set of situations that provided for composing to be viewed as communication. Secondly, the ways in which children evidenced graphic linguistic awareness at a young age were studied, with the composing episode as a focal point of data generation.

To do this on a large scale or with experimental methodology was inappropriate at this time. Pertinent variables in writing research are only beginning to be identified (Graves, 1979a). "Detailed observational descriptions" (Hall et al., 1976, p. 585) and observations over time to investigate interrelationships among the variables identified were mandatory.

The present study differed from previous studies of the composing process by

  (1) involving children at younger ages than have previously been studied;

  (2) involving children who were composing in a small

group (of three children) similar to composing
as it may take place in school settings;

(3) following and videotaping the children periodically
for a period of 6 months, for a total of 16
sessions; and

(4) centering the composing episodes around communi-
cation that is purposeful and meaningful to the
child.

The present study differed from previous studies of
children's graphic linguistic awareness by

(1) gathering data as children generated graphic
representation (not as they responded to the
print of others); and

(2) gathering data from the small group of children
as they discussed their composing during and
subsequent to the composing process.

Design of the Study

The study consisted of indepth case studies and
ethnographic observations of three children ages 35, 46,
and 50 months at the onset of the study. The children
were videotaped in structured composing sessions involving
purposeful graphic communication for a period of 6
months--a total of 16 tapes. The videotapes were analyzed
in a variety of ways for insight into children's composi-
tional writing processes and for evidences of their graphic

linguistic awareness. Data were transcribed from the videotapes in descriptive narrative form so that a profile of each individual child as a composer could be obtained. From careful analysis of videotapes, specific behaviors were charted as they pertained to each child's evidences of graphic linguistic awareness. These observations further operationally refined current definitions of graphic linguistic awareness.

As with any study based on anthropologic methodology, the researcher was continually interpreting, reappraising, analyzing, and reorganizing the composing sessions and reexamining the focus of research in the light of previous findings. Questions were generated throughout and evidence reported to either refute or support emerging conclusions.

Scope of the Study

The following questions were asked at the onset of the study:

(1) What are the composing processes of 3 very young children (ages 2-4)?

(2) What evidences of graphic linguistic awareness appear in the composing processes of 3 very young children (ages 2-4)?

These questions were discussed in light of 16 composing sessions over a period of 6 months. As the study progressed, new questions emerged and these also were

considered. The role of oral interaction surrounding the composing episodes particularly demanded attention. Implications were discussed for early childhood education and parental practices. A new list of questions and hypotheses necessitating further study was generated.

Definition of Terms

Composing refers to the drawing/writing/dictating process as evidenced by the young child in structured situations designed by the investigator.

Metalinguistic awareness is defined as an awareness of the nature of one's own language including such awareness as: knowing what reading is; what a letter, word, sentence, and story are; and an awareness of the conventions of print such as left to right progression, word boundaries, etc. (Weaver & Shonkoff, 1978). The origin of the word is in metalanguage--meaning a language used to talk about another language.

Graphic linguistic awareness refers specifically to a child's awareness of the written or printed word or the symbols used in writing or printing to convey meaning. This includes letter awareness, word awareness, spelling awareness, and print awareness.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This study was designed to investigate the composing processes and graphic linguistic awareness of 3 children ages 2-4, utilizing observational and case study procedures. The 3 purposes of this chapter are to review: (a) research findings pertaining to graphic linguistic awareness; (b) available literature on the composing process; and (c) relevant research surrounding various anthropologic techniques of collecting, analyzing, and presenting qualitative data.

Graphic Linguistic Awareness

The term graphic linguistic awareness embodies the child's awareness of the printed word or the symbols used in writing or printing to represent sound and convey meaning. Researchers consistently demonstrate that the terms word, letter, sentence, and number are often confused (Clay, 1977; Downing, 1970a; Reid, 1966) and used interchangeably by children (Downing, 1969) when they are confronted with printed language. Johns (1977) suggests that, in fact, young children do not possess an adequate concept of a spoken word, which may somewhat account for their difficulty in identifying words in printed form.

Studies have further shown that children have difficulty
segmenting words visually and identifying visual word
boundaries (Holden & MacGinitie, 1972; Meltzer & Herse,
1969). Downing (1969) quotes Vernon as citing a kind of
"cognitive confusion" that typically characterizes young
children's encounters with print, though most children
are able to work themselves into increasing "cognitive
clarity" (Downing, 1979). It is also suggested that this
initial cognitive phase, in which the basic conventions
of print are introduced and enriched, is often neglected
by educators (Downing, 1979; Ferguson, 1975). It is for
this reason that the "abstract quality of written language
is the main stumbling block" (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 99) for
many children in learning to read and write and that chil-
dren regard the purpose of print as mysterious (Reid, 1966).

Yet, print or writing is merely observable language
(Page, 1974) and has communication as its basic function
just as oral language does. Researchers state that chil-
dren will attain a level of graphic linguistic awareness
in much the same way as they learn to speak and listen
to their language (Doake, 1979b; Goodman & Goodman, 1981;
Harste et al., 1979). Children appear, however, to grasp
the purposeful communication facet of oral language more
readily than they grasp that of written language (Downing,
1969). Perhaps this is because language is not learned in
a situation where it is independent of function (Klein,

1981; Smith, 1977). Children are often asked to learn about the conventions of print in contexts which are, to the child, meaningless and contrived. The child, quite reasonably, may be able to make more sense of written language if it is meaningfully context-bound (Hiebert, 1978). Written language which is meaningful to children, i.e., their own name, has been successfully used to teach conventions of print such as word boundaries (Holden & MacGinitie, 1972).

The sequence of a child's development in the communication skills is generally thought to be listening, speaking, reading, and then, writing (Hall et al., 1976). However, many researchers point out that a child's interest in written language occurs at a very young age (Clay, 1975; Durkin, 1966; Read, 1971). Clay (1977) maintains that children somewhere between the ages of 3 and 5 become aware that marks are made on paper purposefully and that they contain a message. Researchers (Gibson & Levin, 1975; Lavine, 1977) have found that children as young as age 3 can distinguish pictures from writing and preschool children have a definite list of conditions as to what constitutes writing (Lavine, 1977). Harste et al. (1979) contend that the development of oral and written language are parallel rather than serial and that the child will draw on his/her "linguistic data pool" in order to communicate--utilizing "alternative and available communications systems" (p. 32)

in his/her interactions with the environment. The early
preschool years appear to be an active time for the develop-
ment of graphic linguistic awareness (Hiebert, 1981), and
children apparently do not progress in this development
in a linear manner (Deford, 1980; Harste et al., 1979;
Lundsteen, 1976). Growth in the area of graphic linguistic
awareness appears to vary considerably with the individual
(Cazden, 1974).

Further, Doake (1979a) deplores the distinction con-
sistently made between oral and written language and con-
tends that children are intrinsically motivated toward
literacy. It has been demonstrated that children can and
do acquire written language at the same time they are
acquiring oral language (Rhodes, 1979) if they are
surrounded by an environment in which literacy is valued
(Bissex, 1980a; Clay, 1977; Gibson & Levin, 1975). The
same "linguistic curiosity" that motivates the child's
interactions with oral language will motivate them in
interactions with print as well (Downing, 1979). In no
way are reading and writing a second order abstraction
of oral language (Baghban, 1979). Conversely, Downing
(1979, p. 5) reaffirms Mattingly's position that "the
child who is no longer very actively acquiring language
will surely find learning to read very difficult and
unsatisfying."

Development in writing has been frequently associated with development in reading (Hall, 1976; Harste et al., 1979; Luria, 1970), although Reid (1966) found that the children in his studies had a general lack of knowledge of the relationship between reading and writing. Page (1974) states that writing and reading are both forms of language processing. Both have communication as their common function (Gillooly, 1973) and children learn how to write as an extension of their innate need to communicate (King & Rentel, 1979; Lundsteen, 1976). Chomsky (1971) feels that the common practice of learning to read prior to learning to write in schools should be reversed, and Durkin (1966) found that her early readers were extremely interested in writing, some learning to write first and thereby learning to read.

Jean Piaget (1969, p. 70) in citing work done by Freinet in setting up a school states that

> It is obvious that a child who is himself
> printing small fragments of text will
> succeed in learning to read, write and
> spell in a very different manner from
> one who has no idea at all how the
> printed documents he has to use are made.

First experience with exposure to labels and alphabet letters provides a background for linguistic awareness (Ehri, 1975) and enables the child to make "good guesses" about the function of print (Mason, 1980). Smith (1976, p. 299) contends that "children probably begin to read from the moment they become aware of print in any

meaningful way." The sequence of this developing aware-
ness has been shown to be recitation, then naming and
printing of letters, then the actual reading of signs
and labels (Mason, 1980). Smith (1976) terms this early
struggling of children to make sense of print the "roots
of reading." The naming of alphabet letters appears to
be an important component of the linguistic awareness
process (Hardy, Stennett & Smythe, 1974) but researchers
are undecided as to what function this ability serves.
Templeton (1980) terms it a "simple but engaging task"
(p. 457) that the child can utilize as a beginning
venture into the world of reading and writing. Parnell
(in Hiebert, 1978) cites the notion held by many that
the recitation of alphabet letters is a fundamental
prerequisite of learning to read. Others believe that
the learning of letters is an isolated exercise with
little relation to reading. Beers and Beers (1980) fear
the use of letters as one dimensional characters will
hinder reading and writing progress. Smith (1976) states
flatly that the knowledge of alphabet letters is not a
prerequisite of word identification. Opinion is divided
as to whether the child is able to understand the concept
"letter" before "word" (Francis, 1973) or "word" before
"letter" or even "sentence" before "words" (Goodman &
Goodman, 1981; Holden & MacGinitie, 1972). Stanley and
Pershin (1978) state that an examination of the children's

concepts of what they believe they are writing (i.e.,
letter, word, story, etc.) could give insight as to the
child's ability to deal with these concepts in reading.

Children's graphic linguistic awareness can be enhanced
by immersion in an atmosphere rich with printed language
(Bissex, 1980a; Rhodes, 1979; Templeton, 1980). Children
need someone to answer their questions about written
language (Chomsky, 1979) and to share their graphic and
oral communications (Shanahan, 1980). Children must be
provided adult models of literacy and must be able to
observe print utilized in purposeful ways (Hildreth, 1964).
The child is bombarded on all sides with language, both
oral and written, and is actively trying to develop a
system to make sense of it all (Clay, 1975). Writing may
well serve as such a system.

The graphic linguistic awareness of the very young
child (i.e., his/her awareness of the printed word or the
symbols used in writing or printing to represent sound
and convey meaning) can provide researchers and educators
with valuable information concerning the development of
all aspects of the communication skills. Previous studies
have recorded young children's graphic linguistic awareness
in response to reading activities (Downing, 1970a; Holden
& MacGinitie, 1972) and in response to print not of their
own generation (Harste et al., 1979). It would seem a
valuable research opportunity to investigate children's

expression of graphic linguistic awareness as they generate
their own graphic representations in the process of composing.

The Composing Process

Research in the field of composing is beginning to take
a welcome turn from an emphasis on the evaluation of products
to an investigation of the composing process (Applebee,
1981; Vukelich & Golden, 1981). This emphasis was first
demonstrated by Emig (1969) in her description of the com-
posing processes with twelfth grade children. Her research
was followed by Graves' study of the composing behaviors of
7 year old children in 1973 and of 5. year old
children in 1977.

The composing process of preschool children is a
particularly interesting area of investigation. Verbal
activity which accompanies the composing process can serve
as a rich source of data concerning children's conceptions
of language and print. Very young children may not be
able to answer a direct metalinguistic question, but may
provide, through observation, answers to the indirect
metalinguistic question (Sulzby, 1979). In addition, the
examination of the products of young children may fail to
reveal layers of work, later obscured by more graphic
symbols (Lamme, 1981).

Researchers have categorized the writing process into
3 stages (Vukelich & Golden, 1981):

Stage 1--the prewriting stage or incubation period (Schiff, 1979) that included preparation, planning, organization and committment (Britton et al., 1975) to the writing act. This may include talking and drawing in young children (Graves, 1979b).

Stage 2--the composing stage in which the actual graphic representation takes place. In young children this may consist of dictation (Froese, 1978), writing, drawing, or a combination--but the text is clearly that of the child's generation (Clay, 1975). The number and length of pauses children take while composing appear to be significant (Graves, 1979b; Pianko, 1979) as is the simultaneous verbalization of the task that takes place (Emig, 1977).

Stage 3--the postwriting stage consists of revision and alteration of the product. In young children this stage may consist of the seeking of approval, rereading of message and sharing. Graves (1979b) finds peers to be an important factor in this stage.

The composing process of very young children (ages 2-4) contains another vital dimension--drawing. Children of this age cannot (or choose not to) communicate their thoughts adequately using alphabet symbols, but they can purposefully communicate utilizing an infinite variety of graphic representations. Therefore, the composing process for very young children includes both the elements of writing and drawing.

Drawing is enjoyable motor activity--an ability which children innately possess (Platt, 1977). This concrete activity contributes to the learning process in young children (Fillmer & Zepeda de Kane, 1980). Very early in life children are intrinsically motivated (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1975) to scribble (graphic expression) just as they are motivated to babble (verbal expression) (Eng, 1932; Zepeda de Kane, 1980). Scribbling is "motor pleasure" (Kellog, 1969) and much more. Thought to be the "building blocks of art" (Kellog, 1969), scribbling provides the child with the necessary building blocks of writing as well. In fact, in the very earliest stages, writing and scribbling are all one in the same (Hildreth, in Ames & Ilg, 1951)--an external graphic representation of internal imagery (Zepeda de Kane, 1980). As early as age 3, however, children display a knowledge of the difference between writing and drawing (Hiebert, 1978; Lavine, 1977). When asked to write, very young children have been found to produce scribbles that share the properties of linearity and horizontal orientation (Hildreth, 1936) which are not evident in their drawings. Researchers have demonstrated that by allowing a child to interact freely with materials and immersing him in a literate environment, the child's composing behaviors will evidence a network of graphic representations--among them being most alphabet letters (Kellog, 1969). Eng (1954, p. 34), in her daily study of her niece, Margaret, states

> she had no actual teaching, but asked from
> time to time what the name of this or that
> letter was, or asked to have drawn for her
> a letter which she knew she could not draw.

Margaret was 3 years, 8 months at the time. Ames and Ilg (1951), Clay (1975), and Hiebert (1978) are among the researchers who continue to emphasize the child's active interest in the production of print.

Children's early drawing, writing, and scribbling progress through a series of predictable stages, the first of which is the seemingly random scribbling motions, back and forth, circular--which appear aimless, but which give pleasure (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1975) and practice in the eye-hand coordination needed for writing (Kellog, 1969). It has also been suggested that these early spontaneous scribbles define space for the child (deAjuriaguerra & Auzias, 1975). Lowenfeld and Brittain (1975) see the child as progressing from making these random marks on paper to producing a series of controlled scribbles where some control over his movements is exhibited, to the naming of scribbling stage, in which the child has changed "from kinesthetic to imaginative thinking" (p. 131). It is at this juncture that the notion of graphic representations as viable communication begins to emerge (Clay, 1975). It is also at this stage that the development of a symbol system becomes evident and that alphabet letters and other signs begin to appear (Deford, 1980). The appearance of linear mock writing

and the creation of mock letters (Clay, 1975) indicate that the child has transformed the pleasure of scribbling into a manifestation of graphic linguistic awareness. Left-to-right and top-to-bottom directionality may also be in evidence (Harste et al., 1979).

Lowenfeld and Brittain (1975) term the years typically between the ages of 4 and 7 as being the children's pre-schematic stage. They are consciously aware of form and their own ability to create it. They know that symbols are representational and integrate this concept into their composing repertoires. They may try to copy alphabet symbols (Hildreth in Ames & Ilg, 1951), invent their own, or utilize a combination of both. Frequently children, at this stage, express interest in learning an array of signs (Clay, 1975) that have special meaning to them--their names. Hildreth (1936) cites experimentation and practice as the byword of this highly motivating task and concluded that direct instruction was counterindicated.

Clay (1975) found that children may emphasize and reaffirm their growing knowledge of composing behaviors by tracing over letters an adult has written for them. Frequently, then, the children attempt to copy what the adult had written directly underneath. From the composing behaviors of creating alphabet letters and words in isolation (commonly beginning with their names), the child progresses to word phrases and words in sentences (Wheeler, 1971).

Drawing continues to be of value in composing process even after the children are able to write as they wish. Clay's (1975) notion that drawing is an organizational activity in very young composers, seems to hold true as children acquire more writing skill. Graves (1978) and Emig (1977) found drawing to be an essential prewriting activity. Often, however, the meaning becomes apparent for children during the composing process (Graves, 1979b). They use the composing process in conjunction with the thought process.

Children are sure, very early in their lives, that writing conveys a message (Clay, 1977). They have no doubt that written language is functional (Harste et al., 1979), perhaps because they regard their drawings as functional. Children, then, view their acquisition of the ability to generate graphic representation as a tool through which they can realize their desire to communicate with themselves and others (King & Rentel, 1979; Platt, 1977). Hildreth (1964) urges that the communication aspect of composing be emphasized from the beginning and states that "there is no real writing apart from writing something" (p. 19).

The young child is striving for self-expression--an expression of feelings and thoughts--in constructive forms (Kellog, 1969). Early composing which is meaningful and purposeful can facilitate this self-confidence in a

developmentally satisfying way. Children can compose
with writing, drawing--or any combination of the two--de-
pending on the level of their proficiency. They can
purposefully communicate utilizing the elements at their
disposal (Klein & Schickedanz, 1980). Stanley and Pershin
(1978) maintain that children's own ideas of what is being
composed should be the focus of investigation.

As children progress in their composing behaviors,
they may ask for adult help in their spelling. Researchers
are divided as to whether immediate assistance should be
provided (Clay, 1975), or whether the child should be
persuaded to represent the word with whatever symbols are
at his command (Chomsky, 1979; Paul, 1976; Reid, 1966).
This invented spelling frees children from some of the
constraints of their limited knowledge of rule and con-
vention, and gives them the confidence that anything that
is said can be written (Chomsky, 1979), a kind of spelling
consciousness (Gentry, 1981). Sometimes children will
utilize only the first letter of a word to stand for the
word itself (Chomsky, 1979). Paul (1976) observed that
children seldom invented the same spelling twice; emphasis
is placed by the child on the act of figuring the word
out rather than on the product itself. She also observed
that as soon as the child learned the correct spelling of
a word, it would be substituted for the invented spelling
of that word. Purposeful communication gives spelling

meaning and spelling skills seem to evolve naturally in
a responsive environment (Gentry, 1981). Research into
early spelling has been concerned with the product; the
context in which children invent spellings merits in-
vestigation.

Two elements of the composing process appear to be
critical in order for the composing experiences to be
fruitful. The first, that the purpose of the composing
activity be real and meaningful, has been discussed. The
second, then, is that the writer have a sense of
audience--an awareness of the person(s) for whom the
communication is intended (Britton, 1978; Shanahan, 1980).
Too often in composing situations the teacher chooses
the topic, which may or may not be meaningful to the
child (Harste & Burke, 1980), and is the only available
audience (Burgess & Burgess, 1973) and a critical audience
at that (Birnbaum, 1980). A significant difference between
oral and written language is that oral communication is
always replete with an audience (Barritt & Kroll, 1978).

Kroll (1978a) maintains that young composers have
an incomplete sense of audience; that is, they do not
have their audience in mind as they write. He attributes
this lack of awareness to their egocentricity and indicates
that the resulting communication suffers. It seems, how-
ever, that the term audience awareness may have a somewhat
different meaning for the egocentric child. Egocentricity

may keep the very young child from realizing that an
audience can be critical and judgmental. Graves (1979b)
cited Sarah, age 6, as not yet possessing the concept of
audience awareness and thus her graphic play went un-
disturbed. It is possible that the immediacy of an
audience is implicit in an egocentric child's purposeful
communication. These children are the center of their
world. Their compositions are meaningful and fully in-
tended to be read and enjoyed by a significant audience.
The egocentric period may be the perfect moment to intro-
duce composition as meaningful, purposeful communication.
Until they decenter their orientation, and until arbitrary
structure is imposed upon them by the schools (deAjuriaguerra
& Auzias, 1975), children do not realize that writing is
a rigid product-oriented process to be judged. In fact,
Higgins (in Kroll, 1978a) tentatively believes that it is
easier for children to decenter in graphic than in oral
communication.

Writing experiences in schools are often typified
by solitude (Burgess & Burgess, 1973; King, 1980) and
mechanical drill (Hildreth, 1964). Mastery of conventions
is viewed as the desirable endproduct, rather than
communication and meaning (Birnbaum, 1980). Given the
freedom with which children are allowed to acquire oral
language, it seems incongruous that so many constraints
are placed on the acquisition of written language (Doake,

1979a). Early graphic representation in the preschool child can be compared to a toddler's expression of "allgone milk" (Gentry, 1978, p. 89). The toddler is not chastized for his incomplete speech structure, but the beginning writer is often red-penciled for his incomplete written structure. Errors in written language may, in fact, indicate progress through experimentation rather than failure (Applebee, 1981).

Implications for parents and educators concerning the composing process are emerging in the literature. Parents are urged to immerse their children in an environment of print (Lavine, 1977; Rhodes, 1979), to "cradle the child with words" (Bullock Report in Doake, 1979a, p. 4), and to provide children a myriad of opportunities for graphic expression (Baghban, 1979; Chomsky, 1971; Gibson & Levin, 1975). Teachers are encouraged to serve as a writing model and to demonstrate the communicative aspect of graphic representation (Vukelich & Golden, 1981). Further, researchers are calling for as much class time devoted to writing as to reading (Hildreth, 1964). Hughes (1978) determined that British children spend from 8 to 14 hours per week engaged in the composing process. By contrast, children in the United States were found to spend from a low of 1/2 hour per month to a high of 2-1/2 hours per week composing.

Teachers are encouraged to regard composing as a highly individual process (Graves, 1975) and to allow

children to proceed at their own pace aided by an array of graphic materials (Lavine, 1977). Shanahan (1980) cautions educators not to wait until children can read to begin composing instruction, and Chomsky (1979) maintains that effective reading instruction should begin with writing.

Adults must be active, interested and accepting factors in the child's composing environment, offering assistance when asked (Lamme, 1981) and remaining silent when the child wants (and needs) to go it alone (Klein & Schieckedanz, 1980). Children must be allowed to make their own discoveries about written language (Goodman & Goodman, 1981). Young children actively express more interest in process than product. Adults are asked to do the same (Rhodes, 1979).

Researchers also speak of those who would build a theory of the development of the composing process. King and Rentel (1979) urges careful examination of the early stages of writing development and a close look at the way in which children move from oral to graphic expression. Graves (1981) calls for the identification of pertinent variables in the composing process and illustration of their interrelationships. The process of composing must be the focal point of study, not the finished product (Hall et al., 1976). The context in which the composing process takes place also must be investigated (Graves, 1981).

A wealth of data exists in the behaviors of preschool children; researchers must tap this source with methodology that is both dynamic and precise in order for the foundations of a theory to be laid. It is possible that elements of transactional reading theory (Rosenblatt, 1969) and the socio-psycholinguistic theory of written language development (Harste et al., 1979) may be meaningfully applied to formulation of a theory of early composing behavior and the accompanying manifestations of graphic linguistic awareness.

Methodology

Research methodologies concerned with investigations into new fields of inquiry must be eclectic in design. Studies performed with very young children (ages 2-4) must include alternative data gathering and analytic techniques in addition to conventional measurement and evaluation procedures.

The development of graphic linguistic awareness and the composing (dictating/drawing/writing) processes of very young children (ages 2-4) are areas currently in need of study (Vukelich & Golden, 1981). The examination of finished composing products and quantifiable evaluations of children's verbal expressions of graphic linguistic awareness yield data that can be enriched through qualitative evaluation. Quantitative assessment has typified the literature in the past and has indicated

the need for more descriptive research techniques utilizing
alternative methodology (Cooper & Odell, 1978).

The fields of anthropology, linguistics, and psychology
yield applicable qualitative methods of data collection and
analysis. Whereas traditional experimental procedures con-
tribute to the amount of data gathered, these disciplines
offer additional qualitative methodologies that seek an
understanding of the data generated (Mishler, 1979). Carini
(1975) contrasts the positivist approach to research with
the phenomenonological approach. In the positivist model,
the researcher is independent of the research situation
observing behavior that is channeled into predetermined
categories. In phenomenological studies, the researcher
is part of the situation to be observed and no preset cate-
gories are imposed on his/her perceptions. The researcher
develops those categories necessary in accordance with the
demands of the phenomenon observed (Wilson, 1977). Studies
fitting this paradigm are commonly called qualitative,
phenomenological, or ethnographic.

Ethnographic research attempts, through observer
participation in the research episode, to gather infor-
mation about behavior that is lost in traditional quanti-
tative study (Wilson, 1977). Proponents of this method,
which is borrowed from the field of anthropology, empha-
size their ability to focus on events in progress, rather

than on the quantifications of past events (Willis, 1978).
The categorization of behavior is open-ended, not auto-
matic (Garfinkel, 1972). Behaviors are not dissected
into variables isolated for manipulation (Bauman, 1970)
but are described in context, indicating the interrela-
tionships and complexities of variables (Bogdan, 1972).
The popular terminology "illuminative evaluation" (Parlett
& Hamilton in Jenkins & O'Toole, 1978) and "action research"
(Corey in Kyle, 1979) refer to the notion of the researcher
as participant, describing and evaluating behavior as it
occurs.

In emerging fields of study, such as the composing
process and graphic linguistic awareness, much of the
research must be exploratory in design (Lazarsfeld &
Barton, 1959). Bronfenbrenner (1977, p. 513) cites the
emphasis on rigor in research as often producing results
that are technically refined but limited in relevancy.
He further states that researchers often structure experi-
ments so that the results reflect

> the strange behavior of children in strange
> situations with strange adults for the
> briefest possible periods of time.

Ethnographers maintain that human behavior cannot be
understood without consideration of the environment in
which that behavior occurs (Wilson, 1977). Concepts and
hypotheses emerge in the context of the research episode
(McCutcheon's emergent questions, 1978) and theory is
generated as the result of this dynamic methodology

(Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Analysis is not a separate stage in the process, but an ongoing process which shapes the research as it progresses (Becker et al., 1961).

Documenting, a process described by Carini (1975), involves a method of observing, recording, describing, and analyzing behavior in accordance with ethnographic research techniques. No standard format is applicable to all settings; the researcher's encounter with the situation dictates the documenting procedures (Mishler, 1979).

The case study approach has been shown to be a valid one when applied to composing behaviors (Emig, 1977; Graves, 1978) and graphic linguistic awareness in young children (Bissex, 1980a; Rhodes, 1979). Hedda Bolgar (in Graves, 1977, p. 2) states that "whenever an investigator approaches a new area in which little is known, the case study is his first methodological choice." This approach gathers information over time and in great depth, and generates crucial data to be later utilized in a variety of research dimensions and in theory building.

Methodology of this type must be meticulously done if it is to be credible. Researchers must display an objectivity--an ability to move beyond their own perspective and include the perspectives of others (Wilson, 1977). Data must be examined in a variety of ways and reported clearly and vividly (Kyle, 1979). The researcher must

constantly describe and interpret data and report emerging patterns as they become evident (Ross, 1978) with truth- fulness a prime requisite (McCutcheon, 1978). Rigor in research design and relevance in the ethnographic tradi- tion do not have to be mutually exclusive (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Enough evidence should be reported on a given point to give the reader confidence in the researcher's tentative multiple hypotheses (Becker et al., 1961). The final conclusions reached or questions generated must be thoroughly checked and receive adequate support from data gathered throughout the research endeavor (Becker, 1958). Some results may be presented in ways similar to tradi- tional educational research, if the data justify this type of presentation (Wilson, 1977). The reader must be able to understand the theoretical framework (however tentative) under which the researcher is operating (Glaser & Strauss, 1965).

The descriptive, ethnographic, and case study approaches to research are not ends in themselves. They generate questions and tentative hypotheses which may serve as the basis for further research projects. These methodologies can propose general categories, properties or processes; further investigation can validate and confirm them (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Summary

Research into the composing behaviors and graphic linguistic awareness of very young children is in its infancy. It appears, however, that a study of the evidence of graphic linguistic awareness manifested by children as they are composing (dictating, writing, drawing) would provide much needed information in both of the areas in question. Traditional methodology is not a feasible alternative; qualitative, descriptive, ethnographic research in the form of case studies is the design of choice.

This study endeavored to broaden the field of composing research by:

    (1) examining the composing process of very young children (ages 2-4) over time;

    (2) focusing on the process of composing rather than the product;

    (3) involving children who are composing in a small group similar to composing as it could take place in school settings; and

    (4) investigating the effect of composing purposeful activities on the generation of graphic representation.

This study endeavored to broaden the field of graphic linguistic awareness by:

(1) examining the graphic linguistic awareness children evidence as they generate their own graphic representation;

(2) exploring the verbal interactions of a small group of children during and subsequent to the composing process; and

(3) determining the effect of purposeful composing activities on children's development of graphic linguistic awareness.

CHAPTER III
DESIGN

The purpose of this study was to investigate the development of the composing processes and emergent graphic linguistic awareness of 3 very young children. This was done through the qualitative analysis of data generated in 16 structured composing sessions conducted over a 6 month time span. This chapter describes the research design and analysis procedures employed in this study.

Subjects

Three subjects were recruited for the study. A description of each child follows.

Terrence (Terry) was age 46 months at the onset of the study. He is 1 of 4 children, with 2 older brothers (Kelly, age 9-1/2 and Timmy, age 10-1/2) and a younger sister (Kate, age 10 months). Terry's father is a physician and his mother is a doctoral student in early childhood education at the University of Florida (this researcher). Terry attended preschool three mornings a week at the time of the study.

Laurel was 35 months old when the study began. She is an only child. Her father is an associate professor of geography at the University of Florida where her mother

is an associate professor of early childhood education.
Laurel did not attend nursery school during the time of
the study.

Amy, 50 months, is ,1 of 4 children. She has
2 older sisters (Kathleen, age 9-1/2 and Maureen, age
6-1/2) and 1 younger sister (Megan, age 9 months). Her
father is a physician at the University of Florida Medical
Center. Her mother has a master's degree in reading and
conducts preschool playgroups. Amy attended preschool
5: mornings a week during the study.

These children were chosen for a variety of reasons.
All 3 were easily accessible to the investigator and
could be closely followed and videotaped for the 6 month
period of study.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) encourage the choice of
a group for discovering theory that will help generate
as many properties of the development of emergent cate-
gories as possible. Graves (1979b) maintains that the
choice of children for a case study approach is the exact
opposite of the typical experimental approach of random
sampling. Children are carefully selected who will
generate quantities of data and illustrate critical
variables. The children chosen for this study possessed
a verbal ability that enabled the researcher to obtain
a clearer picture of the composing activities and
accompanying thought processes than if the children were

reluctant verbalizers. The 3 children were all com-
fortable with the researcher and with each other.

<div align="center">Procedure</div>

The 3 children were brought to the College of
Education by the researcher. They were taken to a room
containing a videotape apparatus, toys and games, and a
writing corner with a small table and four chairs. The
children usually brought their lunch.

Each of the 16 videotaped sessions began with the
children sitting at the small table with the researcher.
The focus of all these composing episodes was the genera-
tion of meaningful communication. Each product, rather
than being evaluated and kept by the researcher, was to
be delivered to the person for whom it was intended. The
course of the composing activities was not charted in
advance, nor were the materials used. Each session was
guided by the observation, analysis, and questions raised
in the previous sessions. The sessions which emerged
through this process were as follows:

Episode 1--Introduction, exploration of materials.
The children were introduced to the format, the room, and
the notion of composing together with the researcher at
the table. No structured activity was proposed for this
first session. The children were allowed to freely inter-
act with the materials and each other. (35 minutes)

Episode 2--Making Halloween cards. Each child was given a specific composing task of making a greeting card for anyone he/she wished. The children were taped individually with the researcher. It was decided at this juncture to allow the children to compose as a group of three to see if more data would be generated. (30 minutes)

Episode 3--Making placecards. The children composed as a group and made placecards for those who would be attending their Thanksgiving dinners. (1 hour 20 minutes)

Episode 4--Writing letters. The children composed letters to leave for Santa when he came on Christmas eve. (60 minutes)

Episode 5--Composing a story. The children were encouraged to write and draw a story of their choice. (40 minutes)

Episode 6--Making Christmas gifts. The children drew and wrote messages that were put into plastic holders and given as placemats to the person of their choice as a Christmas present. (55 minutes)

Episode 7--Making greeting cards. The children made Valentine cards for each other. (35 minutes)

Episode 8--Making greeting cards. The children made Valentine cards for family members. (45 minutes)

Episode 9--Making a book. The children made a collaborative book about Terry's birthday party, which they had all attended. (45 minutes)

Episode 10--Making a book. The children each made an individual book of their choice. (40 minutes)

Episode 11--Making greeting cards. The children made Easter cards for the person of their choice. (40 minutes)

Episode 12--Making greeting cards. By request, the children made additional Easter cards for the person of their choice. (50 minutes)

Episode 13--Making greeting cards. The children made Easter cards for each other. (55 minutes)

Episode 14--Making a book. The children made individual books of their own choice. (45 minutes)

Episode 15--Writing a letter. The children composed a letter to someone of their choice. (60 minutes)

Episode 16--Making greeting cards. The children made Mother's Day cards for their mothers and grandmothers. (50 minutes)

Sessions began with the researcher proposing the day's activity and then having each child state the message he/she wished to convey. The children dictated and the researcher wrote the intended communication. The product was then given to the child to "finish the message--writing or drawing--any way you wish." In later sessions the children asked to write parts of their messages independently. For the last session the dictated messages were written on cards for the children to copy.

The children composed in this manner for a minimum of 45 minutes a session. The researcher was present at the table during the entire process. Verbal interaction was encouraged among the participants. The children, almost without exception, had to be urged to stop at the end of the allotted time.

At the termination of each session a short discussion was held concerning the day's activities. The children then ate their lunch and, if time permitted, played with the toys in the room. The researcher then drove the children home for naps.

Early sessions indicated far more generation of data and time on task in a group of three than when each child was composing alone. The children's verbal interaction was a primary source of the evidences of graphic linguistic awareness. Taping three children simultaneously created a more social and less test-like atmosphere. A further reason for taping in a small group was because so many children (ages 3 and 4) are in school settings for part of the day that the composing process on tape would more closely resemble possible composing activities outside the research setting.

Role of the Researcher in Episodes

The researcher's active role in the study was both directive and responsive. It was directive in the sense that the composing episodes were carefully structured and

tasks were explicit for each session. The children were guided in their compositions and were apprised of the format in which they were to operate.

The researcher was responsive to the children's oral and graphic language. She encouraged them to verbalize as they composed and refrained from criticizing or judging their efforts. Socialization and interaction were at the core of the study and an atmosphere conducive to these was fostered.

The researcher was present throughout the sessions and endeavored to make each episode a positive experience for the children. She incorporated their suggestions into the study and utilized their emergent behavior in directing the course of the composing sessions. The researcher's participation in the episodes is further discussed in Chapter VI.

Data Collection and Analysis

In an effort to make the methodology match the study (Wilson, 1977), the approach to the collection and analysis of data used in this study was multi-faceted. The time for composing process research appears to be ripe, but Graves (1980) cautions against a fragmentary approach. This investigation is ethnographic in orientation, in that the context of the composing episode is of major importance. Employed also are techniques of case study research--extended

observations over time and large amounts of in-depth
anecdotal records. The researcher was also a factor in
the research setting, invoking the tenets of participant
observation. Traditional research methodology was utilized
in the forms of structured episodes and activities and a
laboratory-like setting. These methods, though somewhat
diverse, contributed to a global picture of the children's
ventures into the composing process and the resultant
graphic linguistic awareness they evidenced.

Each of the 16 episodes was videotaped in its
entirety (except when the equipment malfunctioned or
the children's desire to compose outlasted the supply of
tape). The researcher kept additional field notes during
the actual sessions in order to pick up nonverbal infor-
mation the tape may have missed. In addition, the chil-
dren were very young and very eager to verbalize and
often the tapes are characterized by all the children
talking at once. Each tape was reviewed shortly after
the session, so the researcher could add pertinent comments
to the analysis. Since the products were actually
delivered, notes were kept on unique features of composi-
tion that may not have shown up on tape.

Every tape was considered in a variety of ways.
First, the composing episodes were looked at across the
three children. Features common to the children's
processes were noted as were emergent patterns and

sequences of behavior. Each episode was discussed in light of the activity it generated, unique variables that were in evidence, and tentative conclusions and questions that guided future sessions.

Next, each child's composing behaviors were extracted in the descriptive narrative form of a case study. This technique yielded individual profiles of Terry, Laurel, and Amy as composers.

Graphic linguistic awareness was analyzed in two different ways. First, evidences of graphic linguistic awareness were recorded from each tape. From these data a chart was constructed in order to graphically represent each child's progression in graphic linguistic awareness. Categorization for charting emerged from the episodes themselves and was fluid in design, not being complete until the last tape was analyzed. This charting, over a 6 month period of time, was intended to give insight into and further operationally define the term graphic linguistic awareness.

In addition, Terry, Laurel, and Amy used a variety of terms to discuss their graphic representation. All of the children utilized the terms "draw," "write," "make," "do," and "spell" at one time or another. Since children ages 2-4 often give verbal clues to their thoughts and concept formation, charting these expressions and the accompanying behavior was seen as a viable analysis of graphic linguistic awareness.

The above analytic procedures were then drawn together in an effort to formulate tentative conclusions and lay the groundwork for future research.

Limitations

1. The participants in this study were observed in a laboratory-type setting and were videotaped. Although the children were very young and did not appear to be affected, the artificiality of the environment may have had an effect. Comments like Amy's "Oh, the camera fell down; is this how you spell 'happy'?" lead the researcher to believe the distortion in behavior was minimal.

2. The children in the study were chosen by the researcher because of their accessibility, familiarity with the researcher and verbal skills. Their behavior does not necessarily typify other children's progress through the composing episodes.

3. No factor was built into the design to control for observer bias aside from the researcher's experience in research methodology and in experimental studies with young children.

4. Frequency counts of the occurrences of elements of graphic linguistic awareness were, at times, subjective. When children verbalized an element, each verbalization was counted, even if it was repetitive. If the children expressed an element graphically (i.e., colored in the letters of the message), one tally was given for the entire operation. This system of quantification was consistent throughout the study.

CHAPTER IV
THE COMPOSING EPISODES

The composing processes of the children will be
considered in 2 ways. First, the composing behaviors of
the three children as a group as they progressed through
the structured composing episodes of the study will be
investigated. Then, the composing processes of the
individual child will be discussed and a profile of each
child as a composer will be created. The participants
in the episodes were Terry (T), age 46 months; Laurel (L),
age 35 months; Amy (A), age 50 months; and Nancye (N), the
researcher.

Episode 1--Exploration of Materials

The initial composing episode was held in the middle
of September. Its central purpose was to familiarize the
children with the room, the writing area, and the process
of composing with the researcher. An additional function
of the session was for the researcher to set the tone for
future meetings. Verbalization and interaction were en-
couraged and initiated by the researcher. The children
were commended on their efforts and questioned about their
products and processes in the hope of introducing them to
the style of verbal discourse while composing. Since the

researcher knew the children and their families prior to the study, talk of a personal nature was in evidence. This was not discouraged. Verbal interaction of any kind was fostered.

The children adjusted effortlessly to the research situation. All were eager to come together and very interested in using the materials that were on the writing table.

No particular task or activity was presented at this first session. The children were provided with a stack of white drawing paper and a box of large felt tip markers. They were encouraged to write or draw as they wished.

The markers were brand new and each had a distinctive fragrance. The children spent a good deal of time discussing them, experimenting, and changing colors.

Each child was very interested in what the others were doing. They all frequently looked at each other's papers, remarked on what was taking place, and often borrowed or embellished on an idea. A spirit of free interaction and cooperation prevailed.

```
A:  (shows picture)  This is a happy face . . .
    this is a design . . . this is a person . . .
T:  (to N) Can you make me a people?
N:  This is for you to draw.
A:  I can make you a people.
T:  Okay.
```

Very little writing occurred aside from the children's attempts to write their own names. Letters did emerge in the drawings, however. The children remarked on some of

these; on others they did not. Often the character of the
composition changed as it was being created.

> T: Hey, she's making her own name. Hey,
>   Amy, I can make my own name. (T begins
>   to make T, turns it into a Δ)
> N: What's that?
> T: A tent.
> L: A triangle.
> N: A triangle and a tent, too.
> T: A Christmas tree.

The children were anxious to show their compositions
to the researcher and to each other. When one child said,
"Look what I made" the others would turn their attention
as directed.

> L: See this fish! (A & T lean over to see)
>   That's the eye and that's the beak and
>   that's the tail and the head.

The children verbalized freely in their precomposing
phase often orally planning what would come next in the
composing stage.

> T: Hey, you know what I can make? I can
>   make . . . I can make . . . You know what
>   I'm going to make, Mom? A something . . .
>   A man.

Much more drawing activity was in evidence than
writing activity, perhaps because the large size markers
were thought of more as a tool for drawing, or because
no specific purpose for communication was offered as a
reason for composing. A purposeful activity might have
generated more writing-type representation.

The session lasted approximately 30 minutes. The
children seemed pleased with the day's activities and with
each other. All asked when they could come back.

Episode 2--Halloween Cards

In this session, each child was observed composing individually with the researcher. A specific activity was offered: making Halloween cards for the person of choice. The children were eager to get together and before composing spent some time playing with the toys in the room.

The children took turns entering the writing area with the researcher. Laurel elected not to participate in this session. She had wanted to compose while Terry was so engaged, but was turned away and asked to wait her turn. By the time it was her turn, the moment had passed.

In their individual sessions with the researcher, both Terry and Amy were anxious to write/draw, but also wanted to be with the other two children who were outside the writing area. The verbal interaction was not nearly as rich as it had been in session one where all three children composed together.

The episode began with a short discussion of the upcoming holiday, Halloween, and the notion of sending a card to someone. Both the children were familiar with the concept of greeting cards and had someone in mind with whom they wished to communicate.

The researcher used this session to set the tone for the ones to follow. (Although Laurel did not directly participate, she was in and out of the composing area enough to know what was going on.) After deciding to whom

the card would be sent, the child dictated and the researcher wrote the appropriate message. The avenue of communication had to be directed.

        N: Okay, how about if I write . . .
        T: A witch!
        N: How about if I write "Dear Grandma . . ."

The children then completed the dictation by relating the messages they wished to convey. The cards were then signed with "Love," followed by the child's name.

Terry and Amy leaned over and carefully watched as the researcher wrote. Materials used for this session were large felt tip markers and large white or colored paper folded like a card.

The children were very anxious to take a marker and begin composing. All the graphic representation on the cards was the product of drawing. No writing, mock letters or emergent letters were in evidence, perhaps because the large size markers suggested drawing rather than writing. All the representations, however, were pertinent to Halloween. The children were clearly excited about the upcoming holiday and enjoyed drawing scores of pumpkins, witches' hats, etc.

The researcher tried the technique Graves (1978) used so successfully with older children of encouraging the child to talk about his/her finished composition. Questions like "What will Grandma like best about your card?" were unproductive for the most part with Terry and Amy.

With children of this young age, the direct metalinguistic question (Sulzby, 1979) was also of little use. Few meaningful verbal responses were generated, perhaps due to the children's egocentricity and inability to decenter.

The children did exhibit an ability to recognize their names:

    N: Would you like to try your name?
    T: Well, you already writed my name (points
        correctly to name on card).

and to appreciate the concept of communication:

    N: I love your picture. Do you like it?
    A: Yeah, 'cause it says (points to written
        message, touches words as she talks,
        goes left to right) Amy. I love you.
        Happy Halloween (points to words out of
        order, but touches Amy correctly;
        smiles at N).

Several aspects of this episode directed future composing sessions:

(1) It was decided to have the children compose as a group. No one would be turned away or have to take turns, and group sessions, moreover, would foster valuable verbal interaction.

(2) Since the children's names appeared to be highly motivating, it was decided to make names the focus of the next activity.

(3) Utensils other than large markers would be used to see if more writing-type composing would be forthcoming.

Episode 3--Thanksgiving Placecards

Terry, Laurel, Amy, and Nancye (the researcher) all gathered around the small table upon which the materials were displayed. The children were pleased to be sitting down together. A discussion of the upcoming holiday of Thanksgiving and Thanksgiving dinner followed. The children were eager to share who was coming to their houses, what would be served, etc. The researcher then suggested that they make placecards to be used at Thanksgiving dinner, i.e., a card with each person's name on it that would be put at his/her own place at the table.

Four by 6 unlined index cards were folded so they would stand up. Utensils offered to the children were thin (pencil sized) felt tip markers of assorted colors.

The researcher began the composing activity by stating that she would write the desired name on the card and the children would finish the card by writing and drawing as they wished. The children were anxious to get started, and it was decided that they would begin with their own card.

The task appeared to be of interest to the children and a great deal of verbalization was generated relating to the composing that was taking place. The researcher always verbalized what she was writing as she wrote. The children leaned over and closely

watched as the researcher wrote each name, prompting,
evaluating, and commenting as she was printing.

```
N:  (writing for Laurel)  I'll put it right up
    there.  L . . .
L:  A . . . (watching N; T & A lean way over to
    watch)
N:  (writing) A . . .
A:  She has an A, just like me!
```

This activity definitely engendered more writing
type activity than those previously proposed. All the
children engaged in scribbling and writing. They also
did some mock writing (Clay, 1975) making wave like marks
across the page, left to right, and termed it writing.

The children continually showed their accomplishments
to the researcher and to each other. This sharing seemed
to serve multiple purposes. The children were anxious to
interact, to socialize, and to gain approval for their
efforts. Also, showing and sharing seemed to give credence
to their attempts at graphic communication and to reaffirm
their emerging composing competence and graphic linguistic
awareness.

```
L:  (holding up her card) What is that, Terry?
N:  (to T) Laurel's asking you a question.
T:  An i.
L:  (smiling)  Yeeeesssssss!  (A looks up, all smile)
```

Composing in a group situation enabled the children to
make discoveries about their graphic representation and en-
abled the researcher to draw conclusions about their graphic
linguistic awareness.

```
N:  (writing for T) Let's see . . . Daddy is . . .
    capital D . . .
T:  (watching closely) D . . .
N:  (writes and spells) a . . . d . . . d . . .
    and . . .
T:  y.
N:  y.
L:  (looks at card, excited) Well, that's how I
    write my daddy's name!
A:  (looks over) Hey, a y is in the end of my name
    and it's in his name.
```

The fact that graphic representation is used as communication was apparent as the children progressed in this activity. They were clearly aware of their audience.

```
A:  Can I have it for all my family?
N:  Sure.
A:  Okay.  This is going to be for my dad.  Oh,
    yeah, this is going to be for my mom and this
    is going to be for my daddy--and then Kathleen,
    and then Maureen, and then Megan.
```

The children enjoyed tracing over the letters the researcher had made and then coloring them in. It was postulated that this coloring in was done for a number of reasons. It seemed to reaffirm the child's developing awareness of print. It also seemed that coloring in made the product pretty, served to finish or complete the message, and provided a break or rest from the actual generation of graphic representation.

Individual composing styles began to emerge. Laurel spent the entire session completing one card, while Amy finished four and Terry sped through ten.

The children seemed to use verbal interaction to take a break from the activity of composing. They would leave their task briefly, converse with the researcher or with each other, and then resume composing.

```
A:  (gets up and walks over to N) I want to tell
    you something.  You have dark black hair.
N:  Yes, I do.  And nobody in your family has black
    hair, do they?  (L is working and T is standing
    up working)
A:  Everyone almost has brown hair.
N:  Yes.
A:  (returning to chair)  But my mommy doesn't have
    that short hair anymore.
N:  No.
A:  I don't even know what her hair looks like.  I
    forget everytime I leave.  (A & N laugh)
```

This session was a long one (1 hour and 20 minutes)

but the children were reluctant to leave at that.

```
N:  Now, we have to get going, in a few minutes.
T:  I only need Nana and Gus and Grandma and
    Grandpa.
N:  All right.  Why don't we . . . you can do
    one more and then we'll stop.  How about
    that?
A:  But I want to do my whole family.
```

The researcher provided the children extra cards to

take home and finish. They asserted that they had

adequate pens at home.

As anticipated the 3 children enjoyed being together.

Small group composing was infinitely more productive than

individual effort, both in drawing/writing and in graphic

linguistic awareness.

The small markers were more successful in producing

writing-type representation. Only one marker of each

color was available, however. The children frequently

had to wait for the desired color and talk tended to

center around this rather than the composing process. In

future sessions, more markers would be provided.

The purposeful nature of the communication in the session was very worthwhile. Names as a focal point of activity were highly motivating.

The children were pleased with themselves after this session. Terry, Laurel, and Amy all used their placecards at Thanksgiving dinner. All 3 also asked to return to the university before the next scheduled session.

Episode 4--Letters to Santa

Since the Christmas season was approaching, it was decided to capitalize on the interest of the children in the holiday season. It was further decided to maintain the group format, utilize purposeful communication, and provide more writing utensils.

The story "The Night Before Christmas" was read to introduce the activity. Rather than write a list of "I wants" to Santa, in this session the children wrote a card to leave for Santa when he visited on Christmas eve. The children were very enthusiastic about the story, the activity, and the approach of Christmas.

Materials provided in this session were white drawing paper folded like a card, small markers (more than one of each color) and the large "fragrance" markers.

Once again, the session began with the children dictating and the researcher writing the message. Terry, Laurel, and Amy all paced their dictation from the onset of the study and watched carefully as the message was written.

All the children began their dictation with "Dear
Santa" and clearly were aware of the purpose of their
activity.

        N: (writing) Dear . . . Santa . . . what would
            you like me to say to Santa?
        T: O.K.   That . . . "I'm going to write your
            (Santa's) name."

They also brought out the idea that receiving this
communication would bring pleasure.

        L: Boy, will he (Santa) be happy!

Once again, the children shared their efforts with
the others present and talked about what they saw in other's
drawing and writing. Often they challenged what they saw
on the other child's card.

        L: Look at my L.   (T leans over to look)
        N: Let me see.
        T: What is the owl?
        N: An L.   That's a good one.
        T: No, it's a V, you silly.
        L: It's an L.
        T: That is a V.
        N: Well, look at it the way Laurel's looking
            at it.

This challenging and the answering of the challenge served
as a verbal affirmation of the children's graphic linguistic
awareness and their ability to compose. They did not get
angry or hurt, but seemed to play their emerging con-
ceptualizations off one another. Verbal interchange of
this type was both important to the children's sense of
self-as-composer and revealing to the researcher.

        Praise was also a factor in the children's interaction.
Praise from the researcher was one thing, but praise from a

peer offered a new dimension to the composing episode. At one point, Terry had been trying desperately to write all the letters in Santa's name. It was very difficult for him and he worked very hard for an extended period of time. Laurel watched the process intently and when Terry finally completed his effort, she shouted, "There! There!" Terry smiled and held up his card to show the others. "There. I writed Santa's name." Laurel was as pleased as Terry was.

From time to time the children exhibited a degree of frustration in not being able to produce a symbol the way they wanted. The atmosphere of freedom to exchange ideas and to help each other seemed to minimize the frustration and helped the children achieve their goal.

```
T:  Aaaaaggggghhh.   (makes a pounding motion with
    his fists)
A:  What are you trying to make, Terry?
T:  Santa's name; I can't cause I did a wrong . . .
    wrong . . . Mom, can you write a other S?
N:  Where would you like me to put it?
T:  Here!  (N writes for T)
L:  There.
N:  There you go.
T:  Thank you.
```

Assistance seems to help children make transitions and facilitates the acquisition of skills. If assistance is not given, the urge to communicate is thwarted and the frustration is magnified. In another situation, Terry might have torn up his paper or refused to complete the activity.

The children also felt free to request and give help
to another.

```
T:  Hey, Amy, can you write an S for me?
A:  What kind of an S?  You mean a snake letter?
N:  A snake letter is called an S.
A:  Oh.  (writes on T's card)
```

This session revealed 2 general themes. One was the
concept that graphic messages make someone happy. The other
was a noticeable interest in the alphabet. Much of the time
was spent in experimentation with and talking about letters.
Also, for the first time, the concept of "spell" emerged.

```
L:  I made a T . . . for Terry!  (T looks)
N:  Well, you made a T, didn't you?  Is that the T
    you made out of dots?
L:  Yeah.
N:  Very nice, Laurel.
A:  Know what my mommy said?  "Will you spell Terry's
    name for me?"  I spelled it without her telling
    me.
```

Again, names (Terry, Laurel, Amy and Santa) were
highly motivating and the focus of most of the writing
and graphic linguistic awareness that took place.

This activity lasted approximately 60 minutes and
ended with the researcher saying time was short and the
children had to finish up. The time these children
willingly spent interacting with the materials and with
each other was impressive. Also impressive was the time
spent smiling and verbalizing about the composing
activities. The children expressed a real desire to
communicate and a confidence in their ability to do so.

Episode 5--Individual Stories

The activity proposed in this session differed from the previous 2. As seen in the last 2 episodes, the children were clearly aware of the purpose of written communication when it was in the form of a greeting card or placecard. The children maintained the concept of an immediate audience throughout this type of activity and the composition was appropriate and meaningful. Also the graphic linguistic awareness generated was plentiful and illuminating.

Therefore, the children were given an opportunity to participate in an activity more typically found in a preschool situation. The only guidance the children were given was to draw and/or write something that told a story. They were told that after they finished, the stories they composed would be shared. No dictating or writing by the researcher began the episode.

The materials available on the table were large white drawing paper, pencils, small felt tip markers, and crayons. From the beginning, the session was strikingly different both in the nature of the composing activities and in the evidence of graphic linguistic awareness.

No purpose was given to the children for the composition and no audience was named. The children spent longer periods of time than before silently working. This was perhaps due to the nature of the activity or because

the researcher was not at the writing table as much as she had been previously. The equipment was malfunctioning and occupying the attention of the researcher. The distractions were numerous (perhaps as they would be in a preschool situation), but the children appeared not to be concerned. They remained on task for the entire session of 40 minutes.

Much more drawing than writing was evident in the compositions. The researcher had not introduced the activity with writing nor modeled any writing behavior. Still the children were interested in each other's papers and felt free to comment on what they saw.

     T: (leaning over and looking at A's paper)
          You make interesting things.

It was clear, however, that the children were not writing or drawing a story purposefully.

     N: Terry, can you tell us the story that goes
          with that picture?
     T: (quietly) I'm not thinking. I'm drawing it.

Their drawing was a means of communication. It was not a story, but it was a means of communicating their ideas and of interacting with each other and the researcher.

Prodding the children to talk about their story and what they were drawing was unproductive.

     N: (to A) What is it you're making?
     A: You'll see.
     N: Pardon me?
     A: You'll see.
     N: I'll see. Okay.
     T: Mom, let me write what I'm making.

The children finished their drawing and then made up
a story, probably to please the researcher. They seemed
to know the concept of a story and included elements of
their composing into the story.

```
T:  I'm all finished to tell the story.
N:  Okay.
T:  Once upon a time there was a N . . .
    (there's an N in his picture)
N:  A letter N?
T:  Yes.  Who got a cold from the wind
    and the sun . . . (there's a sun in
    the picture, too)
N:  From the wind and the sun.
T:  He has a cough.
```

The stories were clearly not preplanned. The concept
that an oral story could be written was in evidence, how-
ever.

```
L:  Know . . . know what?  I have a story
    to this.  Want me to write it?
N:  Yes, I do.
L:  But I'll tell it to you in just a . . .
    (begins to write letters at the top of
    page)
N:  Look at you writing a story.  Isn't that
    wonderful!
```

The children appeared to enjoy this activity and once
again had to be asked to stop at the end of the allotted
time. However, the verbalization of graphic linguistic
awareness was much less than previously noted and the
compositions were not as filled with writing-like symbols.
It appears that when the audience is immediate and the
communication is purposeful, more writing appears in addi-
tion to drawing. When those two conditions do not exist,
drawing predominates and verbal interaction concerning the

compositions decreases. Future sessions were formulated
with these differences in mind with an eye toward curricu-
lar implications that might arise out of the study.

Episode 6--Christmas Placemats

This was the last session held before Christmas.
The children composed a message for a family member. The
message was then placed inside a clear plastic envelope
and used as a placemat. The researcher brought wrapping
paper, ribbon, and gift tags as well.

The children were filled with the spirit of Christmas
and were very anxious to participate in this activity.
The episode began with the children deciding for whom
the message was intended and then dictating to the
researcher.

Once again the purposeful aspect of the communica-
tion and the awareness of audience was in evidence.

    N: (to T) What should I say? Dear . . .
    T: Mommy.
    N: (writes) Dear . . . Mommy . . .
    T: And . . . say to Mommy . . . Christmas is
        coming and I hope you have a very nice
        Christmas.

More graphic linguistic awareness was generated than
had been in the previous session, though not as much as in
the greeting cards or placecard sessions. The size and
orientation of the paper used might have been a factor.
Paper used by adults for personal communication is most
often small and folded.

Coloring in of the letters was once again an activity in which the children engaged.

        L: I'm coloring in.
        N: Coloring in. What are you coloring in?
        L: O's.
        N: Coloring in O's.
        L: All the marks that you see--you color them
            in and it will be a beautiful picture.

The children may have used mock words to facilitate the transition from their ability to make isolated letters into their ability to spell. Again it seemed that using verbal communication made this transition more within reach.

        A: (has written a border of letters on her page;
            reads and points to letter, one word per
            letter) That says "I wish that," I mean,
            where's the I . . . I don't know . . .
            there's an I . . . two I's . . . (reading)
            I . . . I . . . I . . .
        L: (prompting) I wish that . . .
        A: (reading and pointing) I . . . I . . . I . . .
            wish . . . wish . . . that . . . Megan . . .
            would . . . not . . . get . . . into . . . my
            . . . e . . . mark . . . der . . . der.

All the children were quite interested in pursuing this new behavior and wanted to experiment with it. It was revealing to the researcher in the amount of graphic linguistic awareness expressed.

        N: Terry, what were you going to tell me?
        T: First let me write it. (reading) Okay . . .
            I . . . wish Mommy wouldn't die because
            I will cry and Daddy will . . . and Daddy
            was on a trip.
        N: And that's what it says?
        T: Un huh.
        N: I see. And what are these right here?
        L: That's . . .
        T: Those are the words.

```
N:  Those are the words you wrote.
T:  Yeah.
N:  What is this word?
T:  It's a T.
L:  I can make a T.
```

The children focused a good deal of their attention

on the making of alphabet letters. It was interesting to

note that alphabet letters were used in a kind of graphic

play. They were discussed, interpreted, and their function

or role changed at will.

```
  T:   Mom, look at my colored B.
  N:   (laughs)  A big colored B.   Very good.
  L:   It's a bow.  It's a bow.
  N:   A boat.
A&L:   A bow!
  N:   A bow.  Oh, you think Terry's B looks like a bow.
  L:   Yes.
  N:   You were looking at it sideways . . .
  T:   B starts with bow.
  N:   He's right, isn't he?
  L:   Yes.
  N:   B starts the word bow.  Pretty good.  So it's
       a bow and a B at the same time.
  L:   B for bat.
  T:   It's not a bow.
  N:   It's not a bow anymore, Terry?
  T:   Huh uh.
```

This play with graphic symbols seems a particularly

meaningful experience in the child's acquisition of graphic

linguistic awareness and of composing skills. The children

are able to, through interaction with print and with each

other, adopt the posture of a writer. Verbal interaction

allows them to define, explain and defend their play with

graphic representation and reaffirm the communication that

is its function. The children were very accepting of the

graphic play of each other and were sincerely interested

in the efforts the others displayed. Each child was seen
as a credible composer and what each child wrote/drew/
dictated was meaningful. The children really cared.

Episode 7--Valentine Cards

After a break of about a month due to scheduling
problems, the sessions resumed in early February. Despite
efforts to get all 3 children together once again, Amy was
unavailable for this session due to minor surgery. Taping
the two children was continued to note the differences
(if any) between composing sessions with 2 and with 3
children.

Valentine's Day was the focus of the children's activity.
Terry and Laurel were glad to see each other once again and,
upon entering the room, went immediately to the writing
area and asked to begin. Materials used for this session
were thin felt tip markers and white 8-1/2 by 11 paper that
had been glued onto red construction paper.

A short discussion of Valentine's Day and greeting
cards began the episode, which really needed no introduction.
The researcher began by taking dictation from each child.
The children elected to make their Valentines for each other.

This session was characterized by a great deal of
smiling, humor, and obvious good feelings. Once again the
children were very interested in watching the researcher
write the message.

```
N:  (to L) Who's your Valentine going to be
    for?
L:  It'll be for Terry.  (T smiles)
N:  (writes) Dear . . . Terry . . . (T & L
    watch; L looks at T, both smile) . . .
    and what would you like me to say?
L:  I hope you have a nice day.  (T smiles)
N:  I . . . hope . . . you . . . have . . .
    a . . . nice . . . day.  (both T & L lean
    over to watch)
L:  (dictating) When we're finished with the
    markers, put the tops on (looks at N and
    smiles).
N:  (writes) When . . . (N & L laugh; T smiles)
    silly goose!  When . . . we're . . . finished
    . . . with . . . the . . . markers . . .
    comma . . . put . . . the . . . tops . . .
    on.  (T & L are watching) . . . Love . . .
    Laurel (both lean way over, presumably to
    see name written).
```

The children obviously possessed the concept that they
were communicating and their awareness of an immediate
audience was expressed throughout. This was apparent in
their use of the sign concept in composing their message.

```
N:  (to L) What are those?
L:  (looks up, has written XXXX OOOO) Hugs 'n
    kisses for Terry. (smiles)
N:  Oh, Terry.  X's and O's are hugs and kisses
    from Laurel.  (T looks, smiles)  That's a
    nice thing to send on a Valentine's card.
L:  (pointing)  See, these are hugs; see these
    are hugs . . .
N:  Those are hugs . . .
L:  Yes, and these are kisses.
T:  (smiling, leaning over) Are the X's are
    kisses?
L:  Ummmmm.
T:  (drawing circles) These are hugs and
    tickles! (N,T,L laugh)
```

The children repeated their previous inclination to
trace over and color in the letters of the written message.
Terry traced the words in the message, out of order, but
always completed each word left to right. Coloring in

behavior had continued for quite some time and had endured even though the tone of the composing behaviors had changed. This pattern may continue as a pleasurable and consistent reaffirmation of print awareness. Or it may have been simply the children's desire to make print more like the pictures they were more familiar with.

The children also continued showing and sharing their cards with each other and the researcher. In this session, however, it seemed as though the focal point of this sharing shifted somewhat from the researcher to the other child.

```
T:  Laurel.  Laurel.
L:  What?
T:  These are bees.
L:  Bees?
N:  Bees on the back of your Valentine card,
    Laurel.
L:  And some up front.
T:  No bees on front.
L:  Where?  I mean these (points).
T:  Those are . . . those are just spots.
L:  Oh.  (T & L laugh)
```

This session marked two changes in Terry's process of composing. First, he held his pen correctly. Laurel and Amy had been holding their utensils appropriately from the beginning, but Terry had held his like a paint brush.

Secondly, Terry worked the entire session on one product just as Laurel did. Whether this was just a change in his composing behavior or whether he was modeling some of Laurel's behavior was unknown. The possibility for this modeling to occur, if indeed that is what it was, may have been more likely in a group of two than in the group of three.

This session was shorter than previous ones (35 minutes) and was not as filled with verbalization of graphic linguistic awareness. It was postulated that more desirable verbal interaction occurs in a group of three and that the compositions are more diverse and complex. However, the session was a very productive one in viewing the obvious affective component of the generation of purposeful communication for an immediate audience.

Episode 8--Valentine Cards

The three children came to this session displaying the enthusiasm the researcher had come to expect at holiday time. This episode was taped on Valentine's Day and the children were happy and eager to compose. Naturally, the activity of the day was making Valentine cards. The children decided to make their cards for mommy and daddy.

The materials offered for use in the session were thin markers, pencils, Valentine stickers, and white paper inside a red or pink folder. The children spent a great deal of time during the course of the activity paying attention to alphabel letters and word construction. They asked more questions about the elements of the written message than they had previously.

```
N:  (writes for A) Dear . . . Mommy . . .
    and . . . Daddy . . .
A:  How come there's two D's?
N:  Pardon me?
A:  How come there's two D's?
N:  Two D's in Daddy.
A:  Oh.
```

```
N:  D-a-d-d-y.  Two little d's and a capital D.
A:  I mean, these two D's.  (points; T leans
    over to see)
N:  Dear starts with a D.  And Daddy, too.
A:  Oh.
```

Very definite attention was given to initial consonants

and their sounds.

```
L:  This says God.  God.  (has written God)
N:  Look what Laurel wrote.  She wrote a word
    (T looks) and it says God.  (A looks)  That's
    very nice, honey.
T:  Guh . . . guh . . . guh . . .
```

The children also became involved in copying from

each other's papers. It was as though they were taking

their newly realized skills and, through the interaction

available in the composing situation, revealing and re-

fining them.

```
N:  What did Amy write?  Oh, you wrote God,
    too, just like Laurel.  (all look at A's
    card; A smiles)  And what's that?
A:  (smiling) Love.
N:  And you wrote "love."  Isn't that good
    writing.  My goodness!
L:  Now, I should copy hers.  (writes L . . .
    o . . . v . . . e)
T:  v . . . (watches closely)
L:  e . . . I did too! (smiles)
T:  Now I'm copying hers.
```

Spelling was demonstrated to be an emergent topic of

great interest. Oral spelling often preceded written

spelling and seemed to facilitate composing. The children

often planned, experimented, and rehearsed verbally, then

began to write.

```
A:  I made Maureen.
N:  You wrote your sister's name.
A:  I don't know how to write Kathleen
    yet.
N:  That's a big name, isn't it?
```

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```
A:  I know.  K-a-t . . . (looks at N)
N:  H.
A:  Yeah . . . h . . .
```

Even when spelling skill was lacking, mock words were
appropriately created. These mock words were accepted as
legitimate composition.

```
T:  Mom, look.
N:  What is it, Terry?
T:  It's a word.  (smiles)
N:  Can you tell me what word it is?
T:  (has written AOUD) Hmmm . . . whale.
    (smiles)
N:  Those are good letters, Terry.  (A, L look)
L:  Now I'm going to write whale.  (laughs)
T:  Copy mine!
L:  (copies Terry's word)  A . . . O . . . U . . . D.
```

It was hypothesized that once again the interaction
among the children made possible a smooth transition into
a new area of skill acquisition. The children were
accepting and facilitating each other as composers.

Although new behaviors of initial consonant recogni-
tion, awareness of word construction, copying, and spelling
real and mock words were displayed throughout the session,
it was noted that these behaviors did not replace operations
previously observed. The children still colored in the
written message and traced the letters. They also displayed
the type of mock writing seen sessions before.

```
A:  They're waves.
N:  Waves.  Oh, pretty.
A:  But they're big waves (smiles).
T:  Mine are bigger waves (starts to make
    ⌒⌒⌒ lines; L is watching).
L:  Well, you know that I usually like to
    color inside of the words.
```

The contrast in graphic representation seen in this episode led the researcher to support Clay's (1975) contention that children's writing development is not linear. The children utilized a wide range of composing skills, some evidenced for the first time and some which were employed session after session.

The children worked steadily throughout the session and were asked to draw their activities to a close after 40 minutes. They clearly took pride in their efforts, realizing that they had worked hard and experimented with some new skills. This session signaled a turning point in the series of observations. The graphic communication of the children acquired a sophistication not seen before and the change in their behavior was dramatic.

Nowhere in the entire process had anyone criticized or rejected their efforts at composing. Their audiences were accepting, not critical; and their role of composer was taking on new dimensions. All seemed to share Amy's final evaluation of the day's activities.

A: (holding up her card) This looks cool!

Episode 9--Group Book

A few days after the videotaping of the last session, Amy brought the researcher a book she had made at home. She was very excited about it and took great pride in her work. Amy's book was brought to the next composing episode and used as an introduction to the activity.

Terry and Laurel expressed interest in the book as Amy carefully shared it page by page. The researcher then suggested that the children make a group book using as the theme Terry's birthday party which they had all attended.

This session was observed with great interest in the light of the changes in composing behaviors and graphic linguistic awareness that had taken place in episode 8 (Valentine cards). The children were pleased to be writing again and sat down at once, ready to proceed. They agreed that making a book would be fine, but the tone of their verbalization throughout the session was remarkably different from the preceding episode.

The children were reluctant in dictating their messages. When they did come up with a sentence, they were very similar.

    T: I had some clowns at my birthday party.

    L: There were some clowns at Terry's party.
          (urged to go on) The clowns did tricks.

    A: They do lots of tricks.

This form of imitation had been accepted in previous sessions as appropriate messages for greeting cards. It was even seen by the children as a form of flattery to have their messages copied. But in this episode, the researcher asked each child to tell about something different at the party, the games, refreshments, etc. After some urging, the children did produce a unique message, but were detached and disinterested in doing so.

The children observed carefully as the researcher wrote, and leaned over to pay particular attention as the author's name   was written on each page.   There was much more drawing than writing in this activity, though the pictures bore little relation to the words on the page.   Some mock writing and reading did emerge as the session progressed.

> T: Mom, I write a word.   (has written ol ol ol lo)
> L: (leaning over to look) He!
> T: Mom, I made . . .
> N: What is it, Terry?
> T: A word.
> N: What word did you make, Terry?
> T: (sounding out) Ummm . . . lll . . . umm
>   . . . lum.

Names continued to be of interest as they had been in the past.

> N: (to L) I see you wrote your name.   (T looks
>   over) Very nice.
> A: (spelling and writing) M . . . A . . .
> T: Now which one will I . . . I'm going to
>   use purple.
> A: (after a time) There's Kathleen's and
>   Maureen's!   (has written their names)
> N: Oh, you're writing names.   (T looks)   Isn't
>   that good!

The children began to do some reading of the words in their messages.   They displayed more interest in this type of activity than they had previously.

> T: Mom, a j in mine, a j in mine.
> A: A j right there in juice.
> T: Yes. Juice. (reading)
> N: Juice.
> T: Juice.

The verbalization of their reading was an important component of the composing process.   It seemed to verify and reinforce their ability to read print.   The concept of syllabication emerged in this try at oral reading.

```
N:  (reading cover) Terry's birthday . . .
T:  Party.
N:  Party.  By . . .
T:  (pointing) Ter . . . ry.
N:  No. Terry, . . .
T:  Chil . . . (the first syllable of his
    last name)
N:  Laurel, . . .
T:  Laurel . . .
N:  And . . .
T:  Amy.
N:  That's right.
```

This session, which lasted 45 minutes, was a success as far as the children were concerned. They eagerly shared their efforts with Laurel's mother at the end of the composing episodes. Although many of the elements of previous sessions were displayed, they were not as abundant or as intricate.

Although the activity of making a book did have an orientation that had meaning for the children, the audience was not immediate nor even apparent. The children did not make a committment to this activity as they had in the past. The book was a group project, not a personal message, which may have made a difference as well. This contrast was to be the theme of the next session.

Episode 10--Individual Books

In the previous session, the children all made a book together. The children were pleased with this effort and all subsequently made books at home. In order to investigate the effect of a group vs. individual project on the composing process and graphic linguistic awareness, this

session was devoted to having each child make his/her own book.

Laurel wanted to write a book telling someone about the weekly composing sessions. Terry wanted to make a book about colors. Amy was absent due to a special event at her school.

Materials available were thin felt tip markers, pencils, 8-1/2 by 11 white paper, and construction paper for book covers. The tape malfunctioned shortly after the session began, so field notes were taken.

For the first time in the series of composing episodes, the researcher was asked to relinquish some of her duties as scribe.

```
N:  Okay, Laurel, how about if I write yours
    first.  What would you like to say?
L:  A book about Terry and Amy drawing.  Can
    I write it, please?
N:  You're going to write it?
L:  Uh huh.
N:  Sure.
```

Both Terry and Laurel began by writing letters at the top left hand corner of their pages and wrote left to right.

```
T:  (looking at L) I want to write my own.  (N
    hands him pen; T smiles, works)
N:  Terry, can you tell me what it is you're
    writing?  (L leans over to look) My, my.
    Look at that.
T:  (reads) O-U-O-I-O-P-O-O-I-C
N:  You wrote all those letters.
T:  Yes, I wrote a lot of O's.
N:  A lot of O's.
T:  Yes.  (smiling)
N:  This is your page about purple for your
    book.
```

```
T:   Uh huh.
L:   (looks at T's page) O-B-O-B-O-B-O-B.
```

The children were pleased with their efforts and
continued composing in this mode.

```
L:   (writing and singing letters) P-E-O-E-H.  And
     that's all I can think of in my story.
T:   (wrote P-O-P-O-V-O-I-O) Mom, I writed a long
     word!
```

The children spent nearly the entire session of 40
minutes writing letters and mock words. The orientation
of the activity was clearly more toward writing than
drawing.

```
L:   (tracing and coloring in letters she had
     previously made)  This is a curious A.
N:   (laughs) A curious A.  (T leans over to look)
L:   (to T) Curious A, right? (all laugh)
```

The children, at their own initiation, were performing
the function that the researcher had previously done.
Before they had traced, colored, and copied the message
that the researcher had written. In this session, they
wrote the primary message.

The original topics of their books were not mentioned
after the initial discussion. The children did a great
deal of playing with letters on paper. They saw this
graphic play as legitimate composing and engaged in it
for an extended period of time.

The session was very productive but, again, somewhat
lacking in the stimulation that is present when the three
children compose together. Making a book was once more not
as facilitative of the notion of composing as communicating
through a personal letter or greeting card.

Episode 11--Easter Cards

Since the previous two sessions were devoted to making books, this session centered around a more personal mode of communication. Easter was some distance in the future but the children were already talking about it, so Easter cards became the topic for the day. The children were encouraged to compose a card for the person of their choice. Materials available were construction paper, thin markers, and pencils.

The episode began with the children dictating and the researcher writing. The children waited their turn patiently, as the researcher wrote for the others. They all paced their dictation and watched as the researcher wrote the message.

The children practiced their reading skills again, picking up details in word construction.

```
L:  (dictating)  Dear Mom . . .
N:  (writes and spells)  M . . . o . . . m.
A:  (looks over) Oh, I'm talking about M-o-m-m-y.
```

This activity had an obvious, immediate audience that was mentioned throughout.

```
A:  Can we do three?
N:  As many as we have time for.
A:  'Cause I just thought about Mommy,
    Daddy, Maureen.
T:  Mom, I'm going to do a lot of Easters
    for my brothers.
```

The children made a personal committment to their composing.

The children's growing awareness of the conventions
of print was evident in their spelling of words, reading,
and self-correction in writing that had not been observed
before. Children spelled words aloud as they wrote them.

```
N:  What did you write, Amy?
A:  M-o-m-m-y!  (smiles)
    (points with pencil)  Wait.  M-o-m-y!
    Wait.  Forgot something.  (A erases
    and writes again; L & T watch closely).
L:  Are you going to do another m and then y?
A:  Now.  M-o-m-m-y.
L:  (to N) She spelled Mom-my.
N:  Yes, she did.  You're right.
L:  I spelled, I wanted Mom.
```

The children watched each other's efforts closely and
were not hesitant to challenge when they thought a mistake
was made.

```
A:  (to N--big smile)  I wrote Daddy!
N:  You did, didn't you!  (all look closely)
L:  D-a-d-d-y.
A:  No . . . (points) a-d-d-y.
T:  (points to letter a)  That's not a D, that's
    an a.
A:  (spells and points) D-a-d-d-y.
T:  You said a.
A:  No, I said D-a-d-d-y.
T:  No, you said D . . . D . . . (A lifts paper
    out of reach).
```

The children seemed to engage in this behavior as a
reaffirmation of their own graphic linguistic awareness.
They did not get angry with each other, but challenged and
defended frequently.

Once again, the researcher was relieved of some of
her duties.

```
A:  (to N) Write Amy.  Wait.  You just have to
    write Amy, okay?  I'll write love.  L-o-v-e.
N:  Goodness me.  Okay.
```

```
A:   (spells and writes) L . . . o . . . .
L:   Amy wrote!
A:   (writes v) Will you help . . . how do you
     make a v?  I forget.
N:   How do you make a v?  You made one.
A:   Oh, yeah.  (writes e.  Now has L-v-e on
     paper)  L-o-v-e (touching letters; scratches
     out v-e, writes L-v-o-e)  Now, L-o-v-e.   Wait,
     no.  (laughs)  I got mixed up.  (scratches out,
     writes correctly)  L-o-v-e.  Ho!
```

The children were very interested in each other's new

spelling behavior and gave positive feedback to the child

initiating the act. The children did not seem frustrated

by their mistakes, but worked hard until their message

was accurate. This process again pointed out the in-

adequacy of an evaluation of the finished product in

working with young children. A look at Amy's card would

have provided the observer with a card with a great deal

of illegible markings and the word love. No indication

of the complex process Amy went through could have been

detected.

The children verbalized a great deal in this session.

Their verbalization took the forms of planning, organizing,

spelling, sharing, evaluating, and unrelated chatter,

i.e., taking a break from their work. They also sang as

they composed.

All the children were composing for the same purpose,

and conveyed almost identical messages. The children were

operating at different levels of skill acquisition, but the

tone of the group was positive and the children interacted

as peers. The children utilized whatever behavior was at

their command and gained recognition and approval for their efforts. They were accepting of individual learning styles and personalities.

```
L:  (coloring in letters of message)
    I have a long while to go because I
    don't do things fast.
N:  You take your time.
L:  I'll never get this done.
T:  (coloring in his letters) I'll never get
    this done, too.  (all smile)
```

Socializing was seen as a vital component of both graphic linguistic awareness and the composing process.

Episode 12--Easter Cards

The children expressed a desire at the end of the previous session to make more cards for other family members. Their interest was so great that Easter cards became the activity for this episode as well. The materials were the same, folded construction paper, large felt tip markers, thin markers, and pencils.

Terry and Amy knew what the activity was to be in advance and went directly to the writing area ready to begin. Laurel was not present.

The children were clearly in charge of this session. They approached the situation with an air of confidence and knew exactly how they wanted it to run. The researcher did not have to direct the activity, but was handed a pen and told what to write and for whom. The children were pleased with their control and authority and did not abuse it.

The children were very particular about the way their
messages were written. They watched intensely and made
certain it was correct.

    N: Okay. It says Dear Kathleen. I like
        Kathleen. Now what?
    A: (dictating) The . . . Easter . . .
        bunny . . . wears . . . pink . . .
    N: (writes; T & A watch) The . . . Easter . . .
        bunny . . .
    A: Bunny . . . wears . . . pink . . .
    T: Pink.
    A: Now write white so it will be pink and
        white.
    N: Pink and white.
    A: Yes (laughs).
    N: That bunny!
    A: Did you write pink and white . . . or?
    N: (points and reads) The-Easter-bunny-wears-
        pink-and-white. Nothing else.
    A: Oh. (T & A smile)

Terry and Amy again focused attention on the names of
family members as well as their own. Writing names correctly
was a continuing source of pride. They seemed to drill
themselves on their names over and over.

    N: What are you smiling about, Terry?
    A: (looks over at T's paper) Ter the Bear!
    T: Terry!
    N: He wrote his name, didn't you? (T looks at
        his name, continues smiling)
    A: But not little, big.

Tracing and then coloring in the letters of the
written message was evidenced once again. It seemed to
define the concept of space vs. print and was very care-
fully and routinely done. The children included this in
their verbal planning.

    T: Know why I have two? (holds up two pens)
    N: No.
    T: 'Cause I'm going to color in.

The utensils were considered and utilized for particu-
lar purposes. Terry and Amy used the large markers for
drawing activity inside the card, but used the thin markers
for writing messages on the front of the card. Pencils
were not used at all.

> A: Wanna see how little I can write my name?
> (T watches closely) Wait . . . I can't do
> it with this pen. I can do it with a
> skinnier pen.
> N: What is it you're doing?
> A: Writing my name little because I can
> write my name little.

Response to the researcher's being occupied with the
other child took a new form. In previous sessions, the
children would wait silently or begin a drawing activity
somewhere on their card other than in the place the re-
searcher wrote dictation. In this episode, Terry and Amy
displayed an attitude of "I can do it myself"--a further
indication of their increased confidence.

> A: (to N) Could you spell Megan for me?
> N: All right.
> A: As soon as you do Terry's? (N is busy
> getting Terry a new piece of paper,
> helping him get settled)
> N: (finally responds to A) Megan is . . .
> capital M . . . (T is having trouble
> folding his card so N turns her attention
> to him again)
> A: (after a time) I can just write M. W. for
> Megan's initials.

In a classroom setting, lack of teacher attention might
have led to more invented spellings than were found in
these sessions. With adult help and help from other chil-
dren so readily available, children rarely needed to invent
spellings.

Even when the children were unable to write standard
messages (or chose not to), mock messages were written.

> T: (to N) I want you to write. No, I
> will write it. (T writes letters with
> great concentration; reads) LLL . . .
> OOO . . . LLL

The session ended with the children drawing silly
pictures of their Mommies on the inside of their cards.
There was a great deal of laughing and joking.

There was an indication that composing had evolved
into a two-step process. The children wrote very con-
scientiously for an extended period at the beginning of
the 50 minute session. Then they drew for the remainder
of the time with only an occasional mention of writing,
letters, or words.

The children ended the session themselves to eat
their lunches. They requested the same activity for the
next session.

Episode 13--Easter Cards

Having made Easter cards for others the two previous
weeks, the children decided that they would make cards for
the other members of the group. Materials available were
folded construction paper, thin markers, and pencils.

Once again, the children approached the task in a
business like manner. They clearly expressed their in-
tentions concerning what they would write and what the
researcher would write.

```
T:  (takes pen from N) I can say Terry.
N:  Well, all right.
T:  (hands pen back)  Love, you have to say.
L:  I can say Laurel.
N:  (to T) You want me to write love and
    you'll write Terry.
A:  Love.  L-o-v-e.
L:  Can I write I love you?
N:  Of course.
```

The children continued their self-imposed drill of
writing names. The words "dear" and "love" were added
to the list of frequently practiced words.

```
L:  What . . . (reading what T is writing)
    Ter . . . Ter . . . Ter . . .
N:  (writing for A) Should I put love?
A:  I'll put love.
T:  Mom!  (holds up card and smiles)
N:  You did write your name, right under
    love.  Congratulations, Terry.  That's
    wonderful.  Super duper.  (T still
    smiling)
T:  I just write it.  Now I have to do it
    all over again.  (L leans over to watch)
```

The children took pleasure in spelling their names
while the other children wrote. This was a child initiated
process which gave the child spelling a sense of authority
and the writer immediate feedback.

```
A:  Terry, how do you spell your name?
T:  T-e-r-r-y.
A:  T-e-r? (T nods) r? How do you make
    a r?
T:  You do it . . . (shows her)
A:  Oh.  (L is watching closely) Now what?
T:  r . . . r . . .
A:  What comes after r?
T:  y.
A:  y.  Terry.  Now Amy.  I already wrote
    love right over here.
```

The children continued to challenge writing they
thought was incorrect.

```
N:  Laurel, what did you write on the bottom
    of your card?
L:  I love . . . and now I have to write . . .
T:  (getting up) No.  That's not how you spell
    love.
A:  L-o-v-e.
T:  (to A, pointing at L's card) That's a I.
N:  She wrote I love and I think she's going
    to write something next.
```

The primary focus of the session was spelling and word construction. At the beginning of the session it was as if the children could talk of nothing else. They took very few breaks during this intense work with the mechanics of print.

```
L:  (to N) Is this how you spell it?
N:  What are you trying to spell?
L:  You.
N:  Y . . .
L:  o . . .
N:  Right.
L:  Just a teeny o.  (N laughs)
N:  A teeny o.  And then u.  You've got it.
    (T looks)
A:  There's a u in Maureen.
N:  U is in Maureen.  You're right.
A:  I know.  M starts with Megan, Maureen,
T:  And Daddy.(smiles)
A:  And Maureen and Daddy.  No.  D for Daddy.
    J for James.
```

An interest in the arrangement of writing on the page was a new concept that emerged in this session. The children expressed concern that the space be utilized properly and the card be in good form.

```
T:  Mom, now I runned into . . . I'm having
    trouble with this.  (smiling, not distressed)
N:  You're having trouble because you're running
    into other words, aren't you?  (T nods, smiles)
    Can you go down to the bottom where there's
    plenty of space?
T:  Yeah, I'm trying to.
```

The children concentrated on correctness of form as
they wrote. The choice of utensil was a factor in this
concern.

  A: I'll erase it. Terry, use a pencil so if
    you mess up you'll be able to erase.

The children definitely made composing a two-step
process. They spent a long time writing and getting their
messages just the way they wanted them. They then completed
the process by drawing. Their illustrations for the most
part pertained to the holiday with many colorful Easter
eggs and baskets in evidence. The time spent in conversa-
tional breaks from composing increased during this drawing
phase.

An examination of the children's cards would have
yielded a hodge-podge of letters and drawings, some
recognizable words and names, and a message that had been
colored in and was barely legible. The richness of the
graphic linguistic awareness and the increasing skills
in composing would have gone undetected. Fifty-five
minutes of complex and varied processes contributed to
the reworked and dogeared products that were delivered
with pride to the persons intended.

Episode 14--Individual Books

The children and the researcher held a discussion on
the way home from the previous episode about the activity
for the coming session. The children decided to make a

book of their own. It was surprising to hear this because, in the researcher's view, the making of books had not been as successful an activity as the other forms of composing. However, though not as rich in data, making books was rewarding for the children. In planning a program of composing episodes, it would have been a mistake to ignore the input of the children.

Amy decided to make a book about ballet and Terry and Laurel decided to make one about their Yamaha music class. Materials available for use were thin markers, pencils, and 8-1/2 by 11 white paper stapled inside a construction paper cover.

There was virtually no writing in this activity at all. The children spent the entire session of 45 minutes socializing and drawing. They seemed to enjoy the experience but their behavior was totally different from the preceding sessions.

No spelling, mock words, coloring in of letters, etc. was in evidence. The children didn't even write their own names.

There was decidedly more physical movement while the children were composing. They were up and down in their chairs, touching and teasing each other.

    T: This is a Easter egg. A beautiful egg.
        (A puts her head on T's shoulder; T
        shrugs her away) Stop loving me. (L
        tickles A on the cheek)

The researcher did get each child to dictate for his/ her book. The content was appropriate, also. A few of the illustrations related to the content, as well.

```
A:  This isn't me.  This is another person.
    (T looks over)
N:  One of the other persons in your ballet?
A:  Yeah.  Class.
N:  Ummm.  Pretty.
A:  See, here's the high barre and here's the
    low barre.
```

Most of the illustrations, however, appeared to be unplanned. Terry, Laurel, and Amy all drew people in their books and named them. Usually, they were said to be one of the other children or the researcher. No immediate audience had been named as recipients of these books. These egocentric children may have created their own audience by drawing a person, naming it, and then calling other's attention to it.

```
T:  Mom, how do you like yourself?
N:  Is that me?  I'm in your Yamaha book?
T:  How do you like yourself?  Amy, that's
    you.
A:  (smiling, points to N) That's you.   (N
    laughs)
T:  (smiling, to A) It's you.
A:  (smiling) No, it's not me.  It couldn't be.
T:  Yes, it is.
```

The children's verbalization reflected their composing activities. They played with language and they played with their utensils on paper.

```
N:  (writing for T) I . . . like . . .
T:  Cymbals.
N:  Want me to say cymbals?  Just I like
    cymbals?
T:  Thimbles, bimbles.
N:  (laughs)  No, cymbals.
A:  Thimbles, he said.
```

```
T:  Thimbles, bimbles I said.
N:  There you go.  I . . . like . . . cymbals.
L:  Thimbles.
A:  Mimbles, he said.  Bimbles.
```

At the close of the activity, all the books were
read by the researcher and shared. The children remarked
about how much they liked their books and that they were
going to share them at home.

The children played with materials and language in
this session. They were at ease and confident in their
composing. They enjoyed the socializing and their chatter.
Perhaps such sessions are valuable in composing to allow
the child freedom from structure.

This episode emphasized how limited a picture of
the composing processes of these children would have been
in observing this session only. The view that research
on composing and research with very young children must
be done over an extended period of time was reaffirmed.

Episode 15--Personal Letters

The children's activity for this session was writing
a letter to a person of their choice. The materials
presented were white paper, large fragrance markers,
medium sized crayola markers, thin markers, and pencils.
The researcher also brought envelopes and explained that
the letters were actually to be mailed.

The children were familiar with the concept of a
letter and did not try to fold the paper before writing

as they had when greeting cards were the order of the day.

They were confident, once again, of their own abilities

and preferences.

> L: (taking pen from N) Can I write Dear,
>   'cause I already know how?
> N: Well, then, you don't need me to do that
>   do you? (L begins to write Dear in upper
>   left hand corner) I'll move on over here
>   to Terry. Do you want to write or do you
>   want me to write?
> T: I want you to write.

If one child became confused in the format, the

others were quick to straighten him out.

> T: (dictating) Dear . . . Terry.
> N: Dear Terry?
> T: Uh huh.
> L: Or Love, Terry?
> T: Dear Terry. No. Love, Terry.
> A: No, see. (pointing) Dear's right here.

The size of the letters the children wrote was the

subject of considerable discussion.

> T: (to N, who is writing for A) Those are
>   big letters, Mom.
> N: Yes, they are.
> T: Mine are only small. Hers is big and
>   hers is big.
> A: Wait. Hers is middle-sized . . .
> T: Mine is littler. Hers is littler.

The messages the children wrote were all different

and were appropriate in content.

> T: Dear Uncle Tom,
>   I hope you have a nice weekend up
>   there. I like school.
>   Love,
>   Terry
> L: Dear Aunt Connie,
>   I always write with Nancye and
>   Terry and Amy Wynne.
>   Love,
>   Laurel

```
A:  Dear Grandma,
         I miss you.  I love you.  Do you
    like your new house?  Maureen had a
    bumper car cake.
                     Love,
                      Amy
```

These unique messages were in contrast to the standard messages that the children commonly put on greeting cards. No child copied from another. The letters were not written for a particular holiday, so "Happy . . ." was not a factor. Writing letters proved to be a very personal communication for the children and one they entered into eagerly. Amy tried to express her feelings about the sending and receiving of a letter and why she was working so hard.

```
A:  Cause, then, if someone wrote a letter to
    you, if you wrote it, you'd know what it
    spells and everything like that.  And you
    want to make it a good thing.  And if you
    want it spelled and stuff like that.
```

Proper construction of letters recurred as a concern. Again, the challenging and defending of form was taken in good humor.

```
A:  (reading what she has written) I . . . love
    . . . you.  (T leans over to look)
N:  Well, isn't that nice.  Grandma will like
    that.
T:  (to A) Where's I?  Where's a I?  That's not
    a I.
A:  Yes, it is . . . almost.  (fixes it, laughs)
```

The children composed in two distinct phases. They wrote busily until they were finished with their written messages. Then they illustrated their letters. This drawing phase was accompanied by a profusion of social chatter.

A: You know where my basket was? You know
   where my basket was? I looked upstairs.
   The Easter bunny should see my room. It's
   so pretty. My room is all blue, all all,
   blue. All over . . . the rug, the bedspread.

The children added another feature to their writing/
drawing procedure. Terry and Amy wrote an additional
letter; Amy wrote to her other grandmother and Terry
wrote another letter to his Uncle Tom. The same dictate-
write-draw-chat process was repeated, though the writing
part of the second activity was not as intense as it had
been the first time.

Laurel, on the other hand, finished her letter to
Aunt Connie, wrote Aunt Connie on the envelope, and re-
tired from the writing table. She returned from time to
time to comment on the work Terry and Amy were doing, but
did not compose again.

The peer interaction and approval was seen as a
highly rewarding dimension of the group composing situa-
tion.

A: Terry's doing his best work I've ever seen.
N: Terry is working hard, isn't he?
A: And I think he's doing the best I've ever seen.

The joy and pride such remarks brought the composer
were obvious. Terry and Amy composed at the table for the
entire session of 60 minutes and Laurel worked for about
40 minutes. It was felt that the group interaction had a
great deal to do with the time the children were willing
to spend on task.

The children made a real commitment to communicating through their letters. Their audience was immediate, their compositions personal. It was hypothesized that Laurel may have finished early because her commitment was less, her audience more distant. Aunt Connie was really her grand-mother's aunt whom she hadn't seen in years!

Episode 16--Mother's Day Cards

This was the final session in the 6 months research investigation. After the previous episode, a discussion took place concerning the activity to follow. Amy suggested that if the researcher wrote words on little cards, the children could copy them and the researcher would not have to take dictation. Terry and Laurel heartily endorsed this idea and wanted to try it out immediately. The children had recognized their increasing ability as composers and had determined a way to become independent of the re-searcher.

The session took place just prior to Mother's Day and the activity was making greeting cards. The researcher wrote words she thought would be appropriate: Dear, Mommy, Grandma, Nana, Happy, Mother's, Day, and Love on small cards and placed them on the table along with thin markers and a supply of folded construction paper.

The children were excited and seemed to physically tackle the writing materials. They sorted through the cards until they found the ones they wanted and then

immediately began to write. All began in the top left hand
corner of the card and proceeded left to right. Laurel and
Amy began with Mommy and Terry made his card for his grand-
mother.

    N: (looking at T's card) Dear . . . Terry, what
        are you writing now? (A looks over)
    T: Nana.(smiles)
    N: You took the card that said Nana, didn't you?
    A: (smiling) I can't write Nana, 'cause that's
        his grandma, not my grandma.

The children were, for the most part, able to read
the cards and chose as they wished. Sometimes they needed
a little help.

    A: (to N) What is this word?
    N: That word is Mother's.
    A: 'Cause I don't already know how to
        spell it.
    N: Well, I'll be glad to write for you.
        (A shakes head) No?
    A: (writes and spells) M . . . o . . .

They wrote some of the words that they had practiced
in previous sessions without the aid of the word cards.
The children seemed pleased with their autonomy.

    N: You don't even need me! Terry has D-e already
        (T smiles) for Dear . . . look at you!
    A: This is . . . oh . . . he wrote a big E.
        (points to lower case e she has written)
    T: Mom, that's a A . . . and . . .
    L: Dear . . . Mommy . . . (writes and spells)
        M . . . o . . . m . . . m . . . y (wrote
        without aid of card; A watches closely)
    T: There! (Smiles, reaches for another card)

The children verbalized throughout the entire process.
They planned aloud, spelled orally as they wrote, formed
letters with their mouths as they were writing, and read
and reread the messages constantly as they were being

written. Self-correction in both writing and reading was
evident in Laurel's verbalization of her progression
through the message.

> L: Dear Mommy, Happy Mother's . . .
>   Dear Mother's . . .
>   My a . . . a . . . M-o-m-m-y.
>   Mother's . . . Day.
>   Dear Mommy, Happy Mother's . . . Day
>   . . . Mommy's Day. Love . . .
>   Love . . .
>   Love . . . o . . . L . . .

Some of the completed messages were arranged somewhat
out of order, but the intent was clear and the pride in
accomplishment was evident.

> N: (to T who is looking at his card and smiling)
>   Very nice, Terry. (A looks, smiles) Dear
>   Terry, Happy Mother's Day. Love, Terry. Oh,
>   good for you!
> L: (leaning over, smiling) Terry!!

The session, which lasted 50 minutes, consisted of
the first 30 minutes involved in writing type activities.
During the last 20 minutes, the children did more drawing
and socializing. Laurel left the table earlier than Terry
and Amy to get some apple juice from her lunch box.

At the finish of the composing activity, the children
and researcher sat and discussed the Mother's Day cards
(or St. Mother's Day cards according to Terry). The
children expressed pleasure regarding their efforts and
said how happy the recipients would be. The children said
they liked working with the word cards and requested the
chance to do it again.

Terry, Laurel, and Amy came a long way during the 6
months of composing sessions and they seemed to realize it.

All shared Amy's pride as she stood up following the final session and surveyed the cards on the table.

A: (shaking her head, smiling) What writing!

The previous description of the composing episodes was global in nature, designed to present typical behaviors and an overall picture of each session. However, Terry, Laurel, and Amy displayed unique and individual approaches to the act of composing.

The composing processes of each child were described in detail for each of the 16 sessions. It was from these descriptions that possible patterns and generalizations were proposed. An account of each individual's passage through one particular composing episode (Episode 3--Thanksgiving placecards) is included as an Appendix together with questions directly generated from analysis of the session. Collective data from these types of observations are presented in summary form in the profiles that follow.

Terry as Composer

```
I like . . . no, I love . . .
to write my name.  I just love
it.  It's so fun.
```

Profile

Terry was an active composer from the onset of the study. He was immediately comfortable in the research situation, owing partly to the fact that the researcher is his mother. He enjoyed being with Laurel and Amy,

and frequently asked when his next day at the university
would be.

Terry was very physical in his composing behavior.
Many of the breaks he took were physical ones: standing
up, walking over to one of the participants, getting under
the table to retrieve his marker. This behavior contrasted
with that of Laurel and Amy who seldom left their seats.

Terry was inclined to verbalize extensively, chatting
with the girls and with the researcher. He displayed a
great deal of interest in everyone's papers and commented
constantly on what he saw, often challenging a structure
he thought incorrect. He frequently borrowed ideas and
asked for help when he knew he couldn't draw or write
something himself. Conversely, if he possessed an ability
the others lacked or discovered a new skill he could per-
form, he offered his assistance, sometimes persistently.

Terry began the sessions unable to write his name
to his satisfaction. He proceeded through a period of
skill development which included tracing and coloring in
of written messages, scribbling, discovering letters in
his drawings, writing mock letters and words, copying
letters and words, writing words independently, spelling,
and reading words and messages. Terry drilled himself
on his new behaviors, most commonly practicing his writing
of names.

He composed eagerly. The immediacy of the audience
was not a factor in his willingness to write/draw, but

was a factor in the content of his composition. When he composed for an immediate audience, he displayed more writing than drawing, asked more questions about structure and form, and spent more time tracing and coloring in print. He enjoyed interacting with the materials and experimenting graphically. An example of one of Terry's contributions to the group book produced in Episode 9 is presented in Figure A.

Terry began the sessions holding his utensil like a paintbrush. No effort was made to change this behavior, but in Episode 7 (Valentine cards) he displayed an ability to hold his marker appropriately for writing and did so from then on. This change appeared after a break of more than 4 weeks in the sessions over which the holiday season had occurred.

He was the fastest worker of the three at the onset. In Episode 3 (Thanksgiving placecards) he finished 10 cards. By Episode 7 (Valentine cards) he was spending his time on 1 or 2 products, concentrating and reflecting on his work. He seemed to devote more time to each product as the sessions progressed and his behaviors turned more toward spelling and writing words independently.

Terry was eager to socialize. He announced his accomplishments and shared his appreciation of other's work. He smiled a great deal and often displayed a sense of humor. Occasionally, he was frustrated in his attempts

I had some clowns at my birthday party.

Terry

Figure A

to compose to his liking, but he did not quit or cry.   He
resolved his frustration quickly, often with the girls'
aid.

Terry was not particularly concerned with tidiness
or order.   He occasionally left the tops off the markers
and was reprimanded for this by Laurel.

In many of the interactions observed, Terry was the
focal child.   He went to Amy more for help, got praise
from both the girls, and offered to help Laurel more.   He
showed off Laurel's work more than Amy's.

He played with oral language more than the girls
did, rhyming, making sounds and singing what he wanted
to say.   He occasionally became silly; this was seen as
his way of taking a break from composing as well.

Composing was a positive, dynamic, and interactive
process for Terry, who expressed himself vigorously, both
graphically and verbally.

Laurel as Composer

```
L:  You heard two big sighs from Laurel.
N:  I did hear two big sighs from Laurel.
    Does that mean you're working hard?
L:  Yes.  I have a long while to go be-
    cause I don't do things fast.
```

Profile

Laurel was a meticulous and reflective composer.   She
came eagerly into the research situation and was pleased
to meet periodically with Terry and Amy.   She is an only

child with no preschool experience, so she saw the sessions as social gatherings.

Her manner was not as openly social as Terry's nor as verbal as Amy's. Often Laurel spent long periods of time watching and listening to what was going on around her. She punctuated her periods of silence with remarks and comments that were appropriate and informative. She did not keep up a constant stream of chatter but interacted freely when she chose.

Laurel took interest in the products the others were making and offered positive comments about them. She displayed genuine pleasure when another child (Terry, in particular) accomplished something on which he/she had been working hard. She was encouraging and supportive of the other children as they tried out new behaviors. She shared her efforts frequently and took pride in her accomplishments.

Laurel was very particular about the way in which her composing was done and worked deliberately. She seldom completed a product (the final 3 episodes being exceptions) and often stated she would finish them at home, which she rarely did. The product was unimportant to Laurel. She spent a great deal of time performing tasks she had set for herself, i.e., coloring in the letters of the message and making borders around the edges of her cards. An example of Laurel's contribution to the group book done in Episode 9 is presented in Figure B.
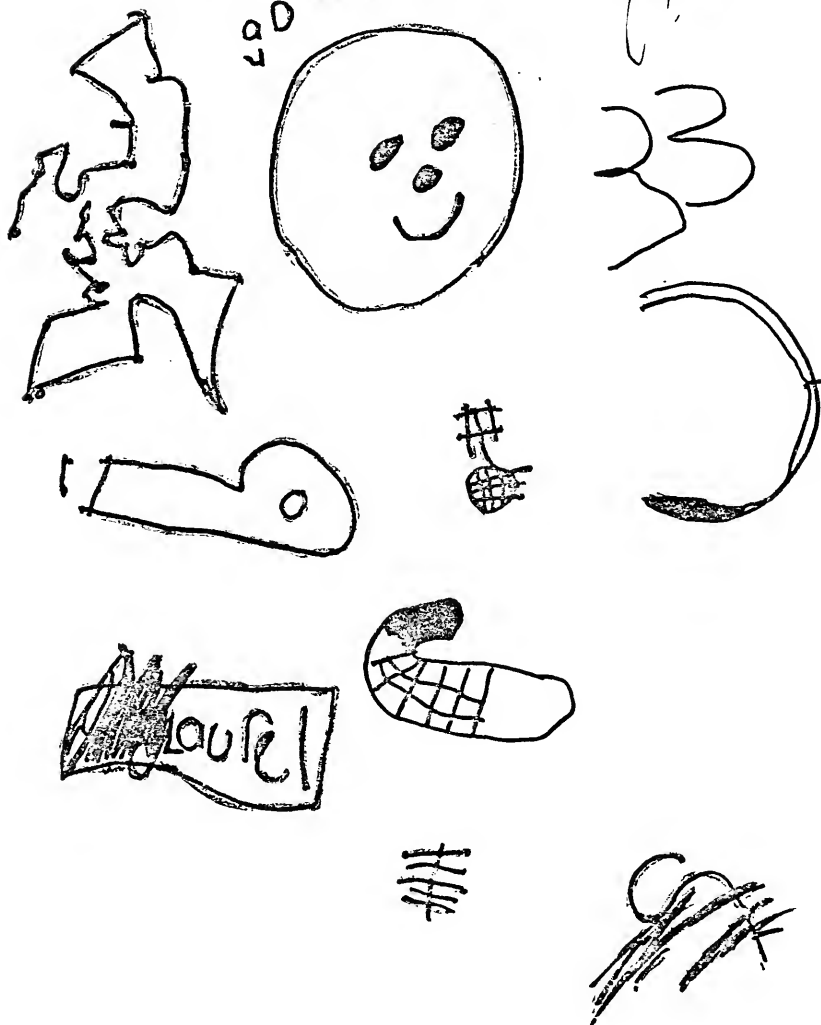
Figure B

When the audience for the communication was not immediately apparent, Laurel was less inclined to compose or she composed for a shorter period of time. When she took breaks from composing, they were spent in listening and watching. Toward the end of the study, her breaks came more frequently during the drawing phase and consisted of social chatter with Terry and Amy.

Laurel was pleasant and sincere when challenged on her composing by Terry. She asserted herself with confidence, but not with anger. She displayed a thorough knowledge of her abilities and freely stated her limitations.

Laurel exhibited a wide range of composing behaviors during the course of the study. She scribbled, named the scribbles, discovered letters in her drawing, wrote mock letters and words, colored-in and traced extensively, wrote independently, spelled, and read her compositions. It was Laurel who first announced her intention to write some of the message herself, thus opening the way for a new series of behaviors.

Laurel stated she was finished and left the table early in the last 3 sessions and did not participate in an early one. She may have been testing her limits. She attempted to make the ground rules clear and helped enforce them by insisting that the children replace the marker caps when they were finished with the markers.

She was aware that she was the youngest child. She often worked quietly. She had trouble taking turns and sharing markers early in the sessions. Perhaps she was testing the limits of group behavior.

Laurel frequently remarked on something she had done in the last episode or a few episodes ago. The sessions must have been important to her for her to remember and discuss them.

Laurel seemed a competent, expressive, and diligent composer who verbalized her thoughts vividly, with the high-pitched exclamations of a young child.

Amy as Composer

I wish it was never time to go.
That's what I always wish.

Profile

Amy was an enthusiastic and extremely verbal composer. She approached each new activity with assurance and enjoyed the entire experience.

Amy displayed confidence in her abilities and shared both her products and her thoughts. She was very interested in what Terry and Laurel were doing and commented on their behaviors, offering advice and encouragement.

Amy initiated more social talk with the researcher than the other children. Her breaks from composing were personal chats, mostly about family members or events

that had happened at home. She chatted frequently and at length, often following extended periods of concentration on her product.

Amy came to the research situation able to write her name easily. She repeatedly practiced and drilled herself on the names of her parents and her sisters. She did not engage in the tracing and coloring-in behavior that so often occupied Terry and Laurel. She progressed through a variety of behaviors including the naming of scribbling, writing isolated letters, writing mock words, copying words and mock words, writing independently, spelling, and reading and rereading her messages. An example of one of Amy's contributions to the group book composed in Episode 9 is given in Figure C.

Amy displayed good humor and an ability to handle frustration with a smile and a shrug. She reworked her messages until they were as she wanted them, going over and over the letters, crossing out and rewriting.

She showed evidence of her nursery school activities that the other children did not display. She was the only child to use the word "trace" and would then proceed to draw a pattern of dots and connect them. She called an "S" a "snake letter" and frequently brought ideas into her composition that she had learned in school. Likewise, she shared her experiences in these sessions with her parents and teacher at school. She made a book at home and brought it in to one of the episodes.

He did stuff that was interesting.

MaUREEN
KATHLEEN   Amy
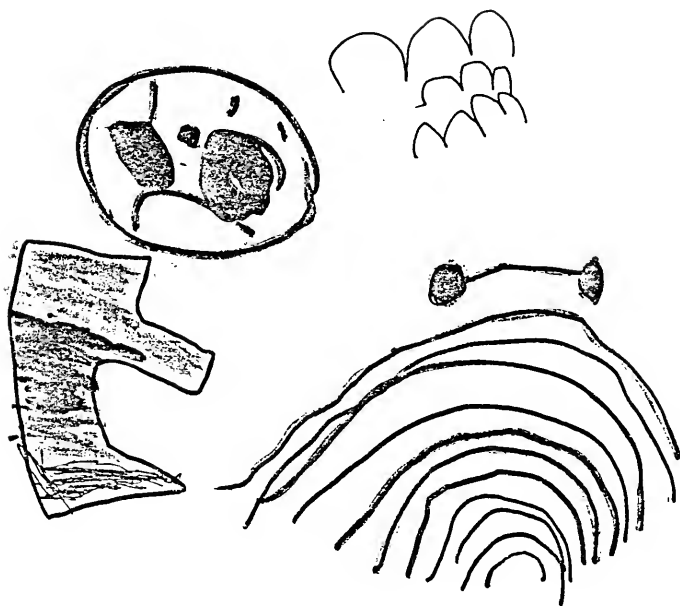
Figure C

Amy was very directive in telling the researcher what her own capabilities in writing were. She was self-assured and she composed with a purpose. Amy often initiated behaviors that were copied or modeled by the younger children (particularly by Terry). She was the one the other 2 turned to most frequently for help, outside of the researcher.

Amy was a positive, interested and verbal composer who communicated with ease and with a smile.

Summary

The 16 structured composing episodes provided valuable insights into the composing processes of the 3 children. After comparing composing in one group session and one individual session, it was concluded that the small group session was more conducive to composing than was a session which included a single child and the researcher. In the group situation, the children were eager and enthusiastic composers, remaining on task at the writing table for a minimum of 35 minutes in each episode. In contrast, in the single child session each child who participated composed for a maximum of 10 minutes.

The composing sessions contained a great deal of oral interaction. The children expressed themselves often and all forms of verbalization were encouraged by the researcher.

The children were very interested in the products and processes of the others present in the situation. They watched closely as the researcher wrote their own dictation and dictation for the other children. They watched the writing and drawing that were occurring, often borrowing ideas from one another and elaborating on things they saw. Terry, Laurel, and Amy commented freely on what they were observing. They prompted, evaluated, responded to, and sometimes challenged, each other's efforts.

Showing and sharing behavior was a constant through-out the episodes. The children frequently called attention to themselves and announced an idea, a discovery or the completion of an act. The others at the table offered feedback, praise, questions, and, occasionally, criticism.

The children displayed behaviors which included drawing, scribbling, tracing and coloring-in print, mock writing, discovery of alphabet letters in drawings, con-structing isolated letters, copying letters and words, writing words and phrases, spelling and reading. The frequencies of these behaviors were tallied for each session and totalled across the 16 episodes. The emergence of these behaviors was not linear, but certain trends did appear. The children scribbled, wrote mock letters and words, and discovered letters in their art-work with higher frequency in the beginning of the study. These behaviors occurred 27 times in all, only 3 of which

were after Episode 9. They expressed more interest in spelling and reading and rereading of messages towards the end of the 16 episodes. Spelling a word and spelling a word while writing it occurred 57 times overall, 47 of these occurred in episodes 8 through 16. Words or messages were read 58 times, 42 of these in episodes 8 through 16.

The children took breaks from their composing in a variety of ways. They used physical movement, social chatter,   watching, listening, coloring-in, drawing, and sharing to provide a rest from composing. This seemingly "off task" behavior seemed to be an important factor in the children's ability to spend such extended periods of time engaged in writing and drawing. The breaks were brief, and the children returned directly to their project. Graves (1975) found pauses to be an important factor in the composing processes of older children. "Breaks" for these 3 younger children may be similar in function. Had the breaks been disallowed, it is possible that the composing behaviors displayed would have diminished.

Names were consistently a topic of both discussion and composition. The children drilled themselves on their own names and the names of family members. They expressed a desire to spell and write names correctly very early in the study, and behaviors dealing with names preceded

those same behaviors in relation to other words. Names
proved to be a major focal point of the children's in-
terest and for their attainment of skills.

The influence of peers on the individual child in the
episodes appeared to be significant. Praise or help given
by another child added an important dimension to the un-
folding composing processes. Peer interaction, and the
accompanying oral language seemed to facilitate a number
of behaviors. It appeared that transitions from one
skill level to another were eased in this manner. The
children copied and elaborated ideas from one another.
Terry expanded Laurel's signs (x,o) for kisses and hugs
to include his own hugs and tickles. "Waves" or mock
writing gave way to standard words. Windows became the
letter "A." It further appeared that the children
handled frustration with a minimum of distress when
another child was there, showing concern and offering
assistance. Perhaps verbal interaction further allowed
the children to define, explain, and defend their ex-
panding role as a composer.

The children consistently displayed their reaffirma-
tion of a number of concepts:

1) that drawing and writing for a purpose is
   communication;

2) that graphic communication brings pleasure to
   another;

3) that communication must have an immediate audience
for it to be meaningful; and

4) that the function of the communication must be
well-defined and personal.

When the activity in the composing episodes met the
above criteria, the sessions produced numerous composing
behaviors and frequent indications of graphic linguistic
awareness. When the topic of the episodes was general,
impersonal, and without an immediate audience, the quality
of the compositions and the oral language displayed was
vastly changed (see Chapters V, VI).

As the sessions progressed, the children's composi-
tions evolved into a two-step process. First, following
the dictation and the researcher's writing of the dicta-
tion, the children would write industriously with few
breaks from their task. Then, the children would engage
in a period of drawing and socializing. If more than
one composition was made, the entire two phase process
would be repeated, except in Episode 16 where word cards
were used.

The children maintained a vital sense of control in
regard to composing behaviors. Terry, Laurel, and Amy
were clearly in charge of the direction of their own com-
positions and, by the end of the investigation, were in
charge of the entire episode. Their efforts were never
rejected by the researcher, the audience, or the other
children.

The research procedure used in this study was appropriate for studying the composing processes of children ages 2-4. Observations of the small group of children generating their own graphic representation in a structured situation proved a useful method for the examination of the composing processes of very young children.

As they unfolded, the composing episodes were rich with data and pointed the way toward many new areas of research as well as implications for parenting and for daycare and preschool curricula.

CHAPTER V
GRAPHIC LINGUISTIC AWARENESS

          N: Terry, what's a word?
          T: A word is . . . something that
              comes out of your mouth and out
              of your pencil.

Graphic linguistic awareness refers specifically to a
child's awareness of the written or printed word or of the
symbols used in writing or printing to convey meaning.

It was proposed in this study that structured com-
posing episodes involving a small group of children and a
responsive adult would provide a productive environment for
graphic linguistic awareness to be revealed. It was
hypothesized that the children would demonstrate their
awareness freely in response to their own generation of
graphic representation. In other studies children have
been directly questioned or asked to respond to print
not of their own making (Harste et al., 1979).

The graphic linguistic awareness that was observed as
the children composed was analyzed in 2 ways. Occurrences
of graphic linguistic awareness were extracted from each of
the 16 videotapes recorded over the 6 month period of the
study. From these data, charts were constructed to describe
in detail each child's graphic linguistic awareness.
Categorization for charting emerged from behaviors demon-
strated in the composing episodes themselves.

In addition, Terry, Laurel, and Amy used a variety of terms to discuss their graphic representation. These verbalizations and the accompanying behavior were noted. It was felt that the children's descriptions of their own acts of composing would provide insight into their graphic linguistic awareness.

Graphic linguistic awareness is a term encompassing many specific behaviors. This analysis endeavored to funnel these behaviors into four categories: letter awareness, word awareness, spelling awareness, and print awareness. These four major groupings emerged from the data and were conceptualized as an attempt to operationally define graphic linguistic awareness. No predetermined framework or definitions were used. The tapes were coded independently by 2 raters and discrepancies were discussed and resolved.

This chapter presents the data as they appeared throughout the 6 month period of the study.

Alphabet Letter Awareness

The naming and writing of alphabet letters appears to be an important component of graphic linguistic awareness (Hardy et al., 1974), but the actual function these processes serve is unknown. In looking at the composing episodes, the researcher observed the children's interaction with alphabet letters to sense if it was a "simple but engaging task" that a child uses to enter the world
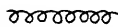
of reading and writing (Templeton, 1980) or a fundamental
prerequisite of learning to read and write (Parnell in
Hiebert, 1978).

The alphabet letter awareness Terry, Laurel, and Amy
demonstrated fell into 4 : main categories and appears on
Table 1. A discussion follows of behaviors surrounding the
making of mock and scribble letters, tracing and coloring
in of letters, noticing letters, and the naming and writing
of letters.

Mock and Scribble Letters

In their composing, the children exhibited behaviors
which demonstrated their growing concept of written
messages. Both Terry and Laurel did some scribbling, and
the children talked about it.

```
L:  (making ᎄᎄᎄᎄᎄᎄ  lines on paper) Nancye, I'm
    doing scribbles.  (Both T and A look)
N:  You're doing scribbles?  Do you like to do
    that?
L:  Yes.
A:  I used to scribble, but now I don't.
T:  I used to, but now I don't.
```

Display of the sign concept (Clay, 1975) involved
the children consistently using a representation, or sign,
as a form of written communication, and then verbally
identifying it as such. Eleven instances of this behavior
were recorded, all in the first 9 episodes. Perhaps, as
the children were able to employ more traditional signs
(alphabet letters and words) the need for this type of
representation decreased.

Letter Awareness for Each Child in Each Episode

TABLE 1

Child	Episode number	1			2			3			4			5			6			7			8			Total			Total
		T	L	A	T	L	*A	T	L	A	T	L	A	T	L	A	T	L	A	T	L	A*	T	L	A	T	L	A	
Makes letter scribbles		1						1																		2	1	0	3
Exhibits sign concept		1						1	1								1	1			1	1		1	2	1	5	4	2	11
Writes mock letters																										1	0	0	1
Traces over letters			1																							3	1	1	7
Colors in written letters								2	1								1	1	2	2						7	10	1	18
Discovers letters in drawings		1						3						1												5	2	1	6
Notices diff. & similarities bet. letter shapes								1	4		1			1	2		1						1			6	7	5	18
Notices small and large size of letters																	1 1	2 3								9	2	9	20
Differentiates between upper/lower case letters								1												1			1			1	2	2	5
Names alphabet letter in isolation																										1	0	2	3
Names alphabet letter in words								1			3	7												1		4	7	1	12
Writes alphabet letter in isolation			1						1			1		2	2	1	2	2 1		1			1			10	4	1	21
Writes alphabet letter in words														1	2			1						3	2	5	4	0	9
Asks how to write a letter											1				2									1		3	1	0	7
Self-corrects writing of letters																										2	0		4

Child	Episode number	9			10			11			12			13			14			15			16		
		T	L	A	T	L	A*	T	L	A	T	L	*A	T	L	A	T	L	A	T	L	A	T	L	A
Makes letter scribbles		1																							
Exhibits sign concept		1																							
Writes mock letters		1																							
Traces over letters																									
Colors in written letters		1			1	1		1			1														
Discovers letters in drawings		1			1														1						
Notices diff. & similarities bet. letter shapes		1	1		1			1			1			1	1		1			1					
Notices small and large size of letters		1	3																						
Differentiates between upper/lower case letters									1			1		1			1						1	1	
Names alphabet letter in isolation											3	1		3	1		1			5	1	2	1		
Names alphabet letter in words											1			1											
Writes alphabet letter in isolation		1			2	1					2			1			1	2		1			1		
Writes alphabet letter in words					1													2						1	
Asks how to write a letter											1	1													
Self-corrects writing of letters								1			1			1						1					

*Child absent

L: I'm writing! (has written ⁓⁓⁓ on card)
N: Oh, look at Laurel writing. Laurel! I
    love it. (T and A look at L's card)
L: Those are "waunkashanes" and "oeys." (her
    own name for these marks)

Terry was the only child who wrote mock letters in isolation and only once did he do it.

Scribbling appears in both drawing and writing. Scribbling and mock letters appear to be a transition from drawing to writing. They also appear to serve a play function, a relaxation or break from "real" writing, and an opportunity for children to think about how alphabet letters are formed.

Tracing and Coloring in Alphabet Letters

Tracing over the letters in the written message was an activity that frequently occupied Terry and Laurel. This behavior was performed with precision and often took an extended period of time. It was never verbalized and the word "tracing" was only mentioned once, by Amy in relation to a drawing activity.

Coloring in of alphabet letters frequently accompanied the tracing operation and was performed by Laurel on 10 occasions and Terry on 7. Amy colored in once. Fifteen of the 18 instances of coloring-in occurred in episodes centering around letters or cards.

N: Laurel, can you tell me what you're doing
    right now?
L: I'm coloring in.
N: Coloring in. What are you coloring in?
L: O's.
T: Mom, look at my colored in B.
N: (laughs) A big colored B. Very good.

Tracing and coloring in of print appeared to serve several functions for Terry and Laurel. It made the message pretty and gave it a finished look. The children shared their efforts of coloring-in frequently and asked the researcher for feedback. It allowed them to reaffirm their growing knowledge of letter and word construction, provided them with a contrast between print and space, and made a statement of their growing awareness of word boundaries. This process also provided them a break from the rigors of composing. It was a form of play with written language that may be a positive step in the acquisition of graphic linguistic awareness.

Notices Alphabet Letters

In accordance with previous examinations of children's art (Kellog, 1969), letters emerged in the children's drawings 8 times. The children verbalized their discovery of the letters with pleasure.

    T: (carefully considering the placecard he's
        making) Mom! I drawed an L!

From episode 3 on, children began to comment on the differences and similarities of letter shapes.

    L: Guess what! Guess what! You turned the
        r into a v!

They also expressed interest, on 20 occasions, in the size of the print they encountered.

    T: (referring to A's work) That's in big
        letters.
    A: Yeah, I wanted to write in big letters.

```
N:  You wanted to write in big letters, hmmm?
A:  Yep.
N:  And you did!
T:  We all have small letters.
```

On five occasions the difference between a lower and
upper case letter was noted.

```
N:  (to L) Let me see what you wrote.
    Dear Mommy, Happy Mommy Day.  Love . . .
L:  It's hard to do an e, so I did E.
```

Children were inevitably excited about their dis-
coveries of alphabet letters in their drawings and thrilled
about being able to create them on their own. They always
showed each other their alphabet letters.

Naming and Writing Alphabet Letters

Alphabet letters not in words were only named 3 times
in the 16 composing episodes, once by Terry and twice by
Amy.

```
L:  Look, I'm drawing some bees.  (all look)
A:  Is she making the letter B?  Oh, I see.
    She made dots.  (which were bees)
```

However, alphabet letters in words were named more
frequently. Twelve instances of this behavior occurred,
10 of them in episode 4 (letters to Santa).

```
L:  (planning to write Daddy)  I already know
    how to do a D.
```

The children wrote alphabet letters in isolation 21
times during the course of the study.

```
T:  Look, I maked a W.
N:  Yes, you did.  (A looks)
T:  Maked a W!  Maked a W!
    A long W!  (N laughs)
```

Terry wrote an alphabet letter in relation to a word
5 times and Laurel wrote 4. Amy did not display this
behavior at all.

    L: I made a T . . . for Terry! (T looks)

The children asked another how to construct a letter
7 times, with Terry and Amy asking more frequently than
Laurel.

    A: (to N) How do you make a J? A J's like
        this? A Y and then a hoop?

Amy and Terry each displayed self-correction as they
wrote alphabet letters twice. This activity took place
in episodes that centered around cards (12, 13) or personal
letters (4, 15).

    T: (erasing) Good . . . I erased it. (T
        writes "T," crosses it out, sighs,
        tries again).

In contrast to discovering alphabet letters in their
drawings and writings, when children named (read) or wrote
alphabet letters they did it with premeditation. Several
times they hotly debated how alphabet letters were formed.
Letter formation had to be technically correct to be
readable and to communicate. Many of these discussions
appeared to be for the purpose of mastering and verifying
letter identification, a skill which had relatively
recently been acquired by these children.

Summary

The children in the study seldom talked about isolated
alphabet letters. They talked more about alphabet letters

when a word containing them was evident. These observations tend to support the fear that the teaching of letters as one dimensional characters (Beers & Beers, 1980) may preclude a child's more natural inclination toward alphabet letters as they occur in words. In contrast, Terry, Laurel, and Amy wrote alphabet letters in isolation 21 times. While they were composing, they expressed interest in proper construction and size.

The average production of letters in isolation during a session concerning writing a card or letter was .82, but during book making activities was 3.0. The children may have considered the construction of alphabet letters more as drawing, which tended to prevail in episodes in which books were made.

When more than one letter of a word was written, the behavior was charted under word awareness. Obviously the children displayed letter awareness each time they wrote words, but their orientation was toward a word, so it was categorized there.

<p style="text-align:center">Word Awareness</p>

The children's word awareness was classified into 2 main sections as shown in Table 2. First, the behaviors the children displayed that gave indication of their concept of a "word" were charted. Next, the writing and copying of words or parts of words were counted. A

TABLE 2

Word Awareness for Each Child in Each Episode

Episode Number / Child	1 T L*A			2 T L A			3 T L A			4 T L A			5 T L A			6 T L A			7 T L A*			8 T L A		
Uses term "word" correctly											1													
Differentiates between letter and word																					1			
Shows where beginning/end of word are							3	1	6								1					1		
Demonstrates awareness of long/short words											1						1							
Copies word																								
Writes mock word/s							1	1	1					1			1			1		1	1	1
Writes name independently			1						1						1									1
Writes word or part of word independently												1			1			1						1

Episode Number / Child	9 T L A			10 T L A*			11 T L A			12 T L*A			13 T L A			14 T L A			15 T L A			16 T L A			Total T L A			Total
Uses term "word" correctly																						3	1	1	4	1	2	7
Differentiates between letter and word	1																						1		3	1		3
Shows where beginning/end of word are														1											4	1	7	12
Demonstrates awareness of long/short words																							1	1	2	1		3
Copies word							1				1			1						1				3	7	2	3	12
Writes mock word/s	4	1	1	1							1	1													9	3	3	15
Writes name independently	1								2		1	1		2	2				3	1	1	1	1		5	2	5	12
Writes word or part of word independently	1																		1	2	1		1	4	1	9	9	19

*Child absent.

description of the specific aspects of these observations follows.

Defining Concept of Word

The children used the term "word" correctly 7 times; 5 of these verbalizations were   in the last episode, where word cards were used.

> L: (happily) I can write all these words, can't I?

Terry was the only child to differentiate verbally between a letter and a word; he did it on 3 occasions.

> N: You want me to write Mother's Day?
> T: All the letters; no, the words.

The children, displaying their knowledge of word boundaries, indicated where the beginning and end of a word was on 12 occasions. Ten of these instances occurred in Episode 3 where the children made Thanksgiving place-cards. The dictation in this session consisted of a single word, rather than a longer message. This may have contributed to the word awareness observed in that episode.

> A: A y's in my mom's last name! Here, look (holds her card next to other cards already done) A y, y, y, and a y. Did you know how much y's there is?

The length of words was mentioned 3 times, twice by Terry.

> T: (pointing to word "Christmas" that N has just written) That's a long . . . long word!

Researchers have frequently emphasized children's knowledge of word boundaries. Each time the children

dictated a message, they showed their ability to segment their own language into words. Likewise, where they read each other's messages, they frequently pointed to individual words as they read. Since these children's concepts of words were fairly well developed at the outset, each of these behaviors was not charted. Clearly, observing children as they generate print does reveal children's concept of a word.

Copying and Writing Words

The children illustrated their word awareness each time they copied or wrote a name, word, or part of a word. This type of behavior was used most frequently in the sessions in which personal communication (cards, letters, placecards) was the theme. When the children made books, they displayed much less word awareness.

The children copied words 12 times. All 12 of these occurred in sessions involving letters and greeting cards. Terry was the most frequent copier.

The children wrote mock words in 15 instances, with Terry writing in 9 instances. Mock words were written 6 times in Episode 9 (group books).

    T: Mom, I writed a word! (has written o7o!77olo)

The children wrote their own names independently 12 times. Terry wrote his 5 times, Laurel wrote twice, and Amy wrote hers 5 times. All but 2 of the names were written in an episode which centered around personal communication.

Nineteen words or parts of words were written inde-
pendently. This included names of those other than the
composer. Laurel and Amy wrote in this fashion 9 times,
and Terry did it only once. All but 1 of the words
appeared in a letter or card.

    A: Look right here. I wrote Amy, Mommy.
    N: You wrote Amy and Mommy. I didn't
        know you could do that.
    T: Where's . . . where's Amy? (A points)
        Where's Mommy? (A points)

Children's motivation to write names cannot be over-
emphasized. The impact of writing names on word aware-
ness is obvious. Each name is a clear and distinct word
unit. Since names often have similar components (begin
with upper case letters, end with "y"), comparisons among
words are invited, as will be seen in the next section on
spelling awareness.

Summary

The children displayed a great deal of interest in
words. They were more interested in writing them (58
times) than they were in talking about what a word was
(25 times). Since they read words as a part of an entire
message, reading is discussed under the section on print
awareness. Activity frequently centered around the making
of names, and all writing of words intensified in composing
episodes in which the communication was purposeful and
personal.

The use of words as a basic unit of instruction in
reading and writing frequently follows the mastery of

isolated alphabet letters. Perhaps these children's
orientation toward words, and particularly names, suggests
that the teaching of letters within words and names would
be more practical and meaningful.

Spelling Awareness

The behaviors included in spelling awareness were
categorized into indicators of the concept of spelling
and the actual spelling process (see Table 3).

Defines Concept of Spelling

The children applied the term "spell" appropriately
20 times, with Amy responsible for 13 of these. "Spell"
did not appear once in the activities involving books.
The occurrences of the word "spell" increased as the
sessions progressed. It is possible that Amy was entering
into a new series of behaviors that were termed "spelling,"
and that she introduced and modeled these behaviors to the
group.

Amy made notice of the way words are spelled more
times than Terry or Laurel. Fifteen of the 28 times this
behavior occurred were in session 3 (Thanksgiving place-
cards).

```
N:  (writing for L) I'll put it right
    up there.  L . . .
L:  A . . .
N:  A . . .
A:  She has an A, just like me.
```

The children called attention to the initial consonant
of a word 21 times.

TABLE 3

Spelling Awareness for Each Child in Each Episode

Episode number Child	1 T L A	2 T L* A	3 T L A	4 T L A	5 T L A	6 T L A	7 T L A*	8 T L A
Uses term "spell" correctly								2
Notices how words are spelled			5 1 9	1 4				1 3
Notices initial consonant				3	1	1 1	1	1
Notices number of letters in word								
Sounds out a word								
Spells a word				2	2			3 1
Spells a word while writing it			1 1		1			3 1
Asks another to spell a word			1 1		1 1			
Self-corrects spelling			1 2		2			

Episode number Child	9 T L A	10 T L A*	11 T L A	12 T L* A	13 T L A	14 T L A	15 T L A	16 T L A	Total T L A	Total
Uses term "spell" correctly	1		1 1	1	1 1		2 3	1 1	5 2 13	20
Notices how words are spelled	1	1	1 1	1	1 3		1	2 1	9 5 14	28
Notices initial consonant	1		2 1	1		1	1	1	7 7 7	21
Notices number of letters in word						1		1	1 0 1	2
Sounds out a word					1				1 2 0	3
Spells a word			1 8		2		2 2	1	6 5 18	29
Spells a word while writing it	1		3	1	2 1 1	1	2 1 1	1 5	4 11 13	26
Asks another to spell a word		1			1 2			5	0 2 5	7
Self-corrects spelling			4		1		1	1	1 1 4	6

*Child absent

```
N:  (talking and writing)  The . . . Easter . . .
    (begins to write b)
T:  Buh . . . bunny.
A:  (looks over)  "B"
N:  That's right.
```

Terry and Amy each mentioned the number of letters in a word once. Laurel sounded out a word twice and Terry once.

```
T:  (looking through word cards) And
    then Mother's . . . Muh . . . Muh . . .
    Then I'm going to do Mother's.
```

Several elements of spelling awareness appear essential as children define their concepts of spelling. One time, Laurel realized that her Daddy's name was spelled the same as Amy's Daddy's name. She had an indication that spelling is consistent; that no matter who wrote the word, it had a consistent spelling. All 3 children commented from time to time on sound/symbol relationships, usually by "sounding out" initial consonants. This type of verbal spelling play appears to aid children's acquisition of spelling awareness.

Spelling Words

The children spelled words for themselves and others 29 times. Amy spelled 18 times. Nine occurrences of spelling occurred in Episode 11 (Easter cards).

```
N:  (writing for L) M . . . o . . . m . . .
A:  (looks) Oh, I'm talking about M-o-m-m-y.
```

Frequently, the children spelled a word while writing it. This occurred 28 times.

```
L:  Dear Mommy . . . (writes and spells)
    M . . . (A watches L) O . . . M . . .
    M . . . Y!  Dear . . . Mommy.  (wrote
    without aid of card)
```

Laurel and Amy asked others to spell a word a total of 7 times.

```
A:  . . . and Jim is G . . . or J?
N:  J . . .
A:  Jim?  (looks at N)
N:  Jim is J-i-m.
A:  Oh, J . . . i . . . m.
```

Self-correction in spelling was shown by Amy 4 times and Terry and Laurel once each.

```
A:  (has L V E on paper; spells) L-O-V-E
    (touching letters; scratches out V E,
    writes again, this time L V O E)  Now.
    L-O-V-E.  Wait, no.  (laughs)  I got
    mixed up.  (scratches out--writes now)
    L-O-V-E.  Ho!
```

These children appeared to spell words throughout the composing process. Occasionally, they spelled a word aloud prior to writing it. Often, they spelled a word as they were writing it. Frequently as they read what they had written, they noticed and revised their spellings.

Summary

All behavior relating to spelling awareness intensified as the study proceeded. By far the most spelling and talk about how words are spelled took place in sessions in which letters or cards were written. As soon as the concept of spelling was introduced by Amy, all 3 children participated eagerly in spelling while writing and spelling for others. The children did little invented spelling. In one case, though, Laurel altered a message (from "Happy Mother's Day" to "Happy Mommy's Day") because she could independently spell the latter word. It may be wise to design instruction

in spelling with an eye toward words used in personal and purposeful communication that children want (and need) to learn.

Print Awareness

The concept of print awareness was indicated by a number of behaviors during the study (see Table 4). The children extensively displayed print awareness through a knowledge of the concept of writing, an awareness of audience, an ability to read pictures and print, and an involvement in writing, dictating, and drawing.

Defines Concept of Writing

The children applied the term "write" appropriately 97 times. The use of the word began with Episode 2 and increased as the sessions progressed. In the last episode, in which Mother's Day cards were written, the word "write" was used correctly 15 times. In contrast, in Episode 14 (making individual books), "write" was only put to use 3 times. The more general activities without an apparent audience evidenced more drawing than writing behaviors. The children clearly did not feel they were writing messages; they were communicating through drawing.

The conscious arrangement of their compositions on a page was a concern to the children 13 times. Terry purposefully planned his use of space 7 times.

TABLE 4

Print Awareness for Each Child in Each Episode

Episode number Child	1 T	1 L	1 A	2 T	2 L*	2 A	3 T	3 L	3 A	4 T	4 L	4 A	5 T	5 L	5 A	6 T	6 L	6 A	7 T	7 L	7 A*	8 T	8 L	8 A
Uses term "write" correctly				1			2	3		7	2	4	1	2		2	1		2	1		1	1	
Conscious of arrangement on page (space)										1	1					2						1		
Differentiates between writing and drawing				1			1			1	1											1		
Titles composition													2											
States purpose of communication (names audience)				2		1	12		6	2	1	1				4	3	2	2	3		1	1	
Reads mock letters/words																								
Reads word or message	2	1		1			5	3		1	2								1	2		1	1	
Reads picture (drawing)	8	3	4	1		3	4	5	3	5	8	1	8	2	2	3	5	6	5	4		2	5	7
Reads word by syllables							1			3	1	3												
Reads alphabet letter	1	1	1				4	3	6				2			1	1		1	1		1	1	
Asks another to read print	1								3				1	2	1	1						1		
Asks another to read picture													2	2	1				1	3				
Shows another what s/he has written	4	3	3	1		1	8	1	5	1	3		10	1	1	4	2	1	1	1		2	1	1
Shows another what s/he has drawn						1	8	4	6	3		2				4	1	2	9	4		1	3	2
Anticipates message/word order																2	2	1	1					
Asks adult to draw/write	5									2	1								1					
Asks child to draw/write	1									1	1		1						1					
Offers to write for another										5	1													
Offers to draw for another									3													1		
Writes for someone else	1									1	1													

*Child absent

TABLE 4--continued

Episode number Child	9 T	9 L	9 A	10 T	10 L	10 A*	11 T	11 L	11 A	12 T	12 L*	12 A	13 T	13 L	13 A	14 T	14 L	14 A	15 T	15 L	15 A	16 T	16 L	16 A	Total T	Total L	Total A	Total
Uses term "write" correctly	2		1	2		3	2	6	4			5	3	5	2	1	1	1	4	4	6	7	1	7	34	26	37	97
Conscious of arrangement on page (space)	1								1				3	1								1			7	3	3	13
Differentiates between writing and drawing														1										1	5	2	1	8
Titles composition																1									1	0	0	1
States purpose of communication (names audience)	3		1			1	3	2	6			3	4	6	3				3	2	5	2	2	3	38	20	29	87
Reads mock letters/words	3	1																							5	3	3	11
Reads word or message	2	3	1		1	1	2	2	1			2				1	1	1				6	11	4	22	22	14	58
Reads picture (drawing)	2	1		1	1			1				4			2	1	1		1		3			1	37	30	34	101
Reads word by syllables	1							1						1											2	3	0	5
Reads alphabet letter				2	3											1		1				1			17	21	9	47
Asks another to read print	1				1	1						1	1	1		1			1	1				5	9	7	11	27
Asks another to read picture	2	1		1	1							1	2	1		1		1					2		4	11	2	17
Shows another what s/he has written	2	1		2				1				1	2	2		1		6	1			1		2	28	10	13	51
Shows another what s/he has drawn	9	3	1			1	2	1				1	2	2	1	5	1	2	2	4		1	2	5	59	26	34	119
Anticipates message/word order	4	1					3	2				1	3	2	1	1	1	1	2			1	1	2	14	13	5	32
Asks adult to draw/write																						1			13	6	2	21
Asks child to draw/write																							1		4	2	1	7
Offers to write for another	1				1														1						5	3	1	9
Offers to draw for another																									5	0	1	6
Writes for someone else																		1							1	1	1	3

> A: (explaining why her letters go around
>   the paper's border) I don't have enough
>   room up there, I don't have enough room
>   right there, I don't have enough . . .
>   (has written letters left to right and
>   right to left). .

Only Terry mentioned the word title. He did this for the book he made in Episode 14. Most of the activities did not call for the concept of title to be employed.

Right from the start these children knew the difference between writing and drawing, although it was only verbalized 8 times. From the beginning the idea of writing intrigued them. It's novelty may account for the large number of times they used the term. Also, since 2 of the children (Terry and Laurel) were essentially scribbling in their pictures at the beginning, their drawings could not communicate as well as their dictated words. The children's excitement about communicating on paper stimulated much print awareness.

Demonstrating Audience Awareness

The children demonstrated the purpose for their communication by naming the audience 87 times.

> T: Write this for Timmy . . . no,
>   Kelly . . . write in purple . . .
>   Kelly's favorite color!

An audience was mentioned exclusively in the sessions in which personal communication (letters, cards) was the focus. In the episodes revolving around a book or a story, the audience was not identified once.

Other writers have mentioned that children do not
acquire a "sense of audience" for their writing until the
middle elementary grades (Kroll, 1979b). Perhaps Terry,
Laurel, and Amy did not decenter (understand the feelings
of another), but at their egocentric age they were <u>very</u>
aware of their audience. In fact, the most immediate
audiences stimulated the children's most lengthy sessions.
The children seemed very aware of the accolades they
would receive from family members and close friends for
their written work. In one case where Laurel wrote to a
distant relative, she became disinterested--the audience
was not immediate enough. In the book writing sessions,
the children unconsciously asked for an audience repeatedly.

> A: (tapping T) Look, look, Terry. This
> is you! You're . . . See your face!

An immediate audience for writing appears to be a stimu-
lant for very young children precisely because they are
egocentric and enjoy the attention their work attracts.

Reading Pictures or Print

The children read mock letters or words 11 times.
They read a word or message 58 times, 21 of which were in
Episode 16 (Mother's Day cards). Terry and Laurel read
22 times each and Amy 14.

Pictures were read by the children 101 times, not
including the times children showed each other what they
drew. This behavior decreased as reading of print
increased.

```
N:   What's that you're working on, Laurel?
     Right there?
L:   This is a piece of bread.
N:   Bread?
L:   Yes.  Amy's eating it.
N:   And Amy's eating the bread!
     (N and T laugh)
L:   Amy's sitting at the table and
     eating it.
```

Words were recognized as having syllables 5 times in the second half of the study.

```
L:   (to A) You wrote Mom-my.
```

The children read alphabet letters 47 times, 27 of these in Episode 3 (placecards) and Episode 4 (personal letters).

They asked another to read print 27 times.

```
A:   (pointing at word card) What is this?
N:   That's Nana.  That's what Terry was
     writing.
A:   What is this word?
N:   And that word is Mother's.
A:   'Cause I don't already know how to
     spell it.
```

The children asked another to read a picture 17 times.

```
T:   (to A) Is that scribble-scrabble?
A:   No.
T:   What is that?
A:   Coloring in.
```

Sharing was a large part of the composing process for Terry, Laurel, and Amy. They showed one another what they had written 51 times (in addition to the 58 times messages were read by another child or by a child to himself or herself). Terry shared 28 of those times.

```
A:   (spells and writes) D . . . A . . . Y . . .
     (to N) See what I wrote so far? . . .
     Happy Mother's Day.
```

The children showed another what they had drawn 119 times. Terry showed his drawings 59 times, Laurel 26 times, and Amy 34 times.

> L: Watch how I make birds. Hey, these are birds! Look!

It is clear from the large numbers of reading and sharing behaviors that reading is a vital part of the composing process. These sessions give insight as to how young children use composing as an aid to reading. The "showing" behaviors reveal these young children's ego-centric nature and demonstrate the boost which composing gives to young children's self-concepts. Clearly, if composing were done in silence, the reading and sharing which so obviously aid the acquisition of print awareness, would be omitted. Oral language obviously facilitates print awareness during the composing process.

Writes, Dictates, or Draws

As the children dictated their messages or were involved in hearing another dictate or read a message, they anticipated the word order to come in 32 instances. All but 6 of these verbalizations came in the second half of the research period. Terry and Laurel displayed this behavior more often than Amy did.

> L: (telling N her message) Could you play the piano? I can play "Wake Up, Hoot Owl, Morning Time is Here."
> N: (writing) Could . . . you . . . play . . . the . . . piano? . . . I . . . can . . . play . . .

```
L:  (watching closely) wake . . .
N:  Wake . . .
L:  Up . . .
N:  Up . . . Terry's smiling because he knows
    that song.  (writes) Hoot . . . Owl . . .
L:  Morning time is here.  Time is here.
N:  Time . . . (T laughs) is . . . here.
```

The children asked the researcher to draw or write

for them 21 times with Terry and Laurel asking most fre-

quently.

```
A:  You make a triangle, and you color
    it in, Terry.
T:  No, I'm making a sq . . . I'm making this.
N:  What did you say it was, Terry?
T:  It's a window.  See the square window.
    Mom, can you make a square for me?
```

Terry asked another child to write for him 4 times,

Laurel asked twice and Amy asked once. All but one of

these instances occurred in the first 8 of the 16 sessions.

The children offered to write for one another 9 times.

Terry offered his assistance 5 times, always enthusias-

tically.

```
T:  (to N) Look!
N:  That's a good D, honey.
T:  Want me to write a D for you, Amy?
    Amy, want me to write a D for you?
    Want me to write a D for you, Laurel?
    Laurel?  (taps her)  Want me to write
    a D for you?  (sighs)  Laurel! Laurel!
    Want me to write a D for you?
L:  Yes, but I already know how to do a D.
    (T writes on L's card)
T:  I'll just will write a picture for you.
    I write a kite for you!  But I can't
    write a D for you.
```

Amy offered to draw for another child 5 times and Terry

did so once.

```
A:   (to T) Want me to write a square?  (T nods)
     With what color?  (L looks up; T hands A
     pen) Now where?
T:   (points) Right here.  (A draws; L leans
     over to watch).
```

Terry, Laurel, and Amy each actually wrote for another child once.

Reading specialists claim that a child's ability to predict words in a story is a critical feature for good readers. Composing, especially through dictating, appears to provide numerous opportunities for children to predict as they anticipate word order.

Children's print awareness was evident in the numerous requests they made to the adult and to each other for assistance in composing. The cooperative atmosphere of the sessions fostered print awareness.

Summary

Print awareness was demonstrated most markedly in the composing sessions concerned with purposeful personal communication. The children spoke of "writing" appropriately and frequently. They consciously arranged their composition on the page. They repeatedly indicated their awareness of the audience for whom their messages were intended. They frequently read and shared both pictures and print (a total of 392 times).

Terry, Laurel, and Amy asked for assistance from the adult or each other in reading, drawing, or writing a total of 72 times. Clearly, all of this talk about print revealed a lot about their print awareness.

Children's Verbal Terminology

At one time or another Terry, Laurel, and Amy all used the words "write," "do," "make," "draw," and "spell" in conjunction with their own generation of graphic represen- tation. The videotapes of the 16 composing episodes were examined and occurrences of these verbalizations were ex- tracted along with the accompanying graphic representation (a letter, a word, or a drawing). It was hypothesized that the children's terminology for the graphic represen- tation would give insight into the degree of graphic linguistic awareness the children possessed.

Table 5 illustrates the occurrences of the children's verbal terminology. A total of 755 minutes of tape were analyzed. The children named the acts of composing 402 times. Several interesting patterns emerged from this investigation.

The children overwhelmingly employed the term "write" in conjunction with composing a word. In contrast, the terminology for constructing an alphabet letter was divided among "make," "write," and "do." "Draw" a letter was used only by Terry and only in the first 2 composing sessions. Expressions relating to the act of drawing centered around "make," "draw," "write," and "do."

The word "spell" was employed exclusively in con- junction with the construction of a word, as were "say" and "put." When the children asked another to draw, they

TABLE 5
Children's Verbal Terminology for their
own Graphic Representation*

Child Says	For Letter	For Word	For Drawing
Write	21	102	15
Draw	3	0	23
Do	15	8**	17
Make	34	9**	116
Trace	0	0	4
Say	0	6	0
Spell	0	22	0
Copy	0	4	2
Put	0	1	0

*From 16 videotapes; 755 minutes.
**Includes mock words.   402 Total Terms

consistently said "make." However, when they asked another to write for them, they most often said "write."

"Write" was used most frequently when the children spoke of their own names and the names of others. "Write" was also used in describing the formulation of initials by Amy. "Write" was the term of choice in referring to the act of composing messages such as "Dear Terry" and "I love you."

The construction of mock words was expressed by using "make" (4 times) and "do" (4 times). Perhaps right from the start, the children knew that mock words aren't really words after all. They were playing with written language.

The terms "word," "write," and "spell" all occurred in rapid succession and in relation to one another in the last 2 episodes (personal letters, Mother's Day cards).

This observation of children's terminology for their own graphic representation led to several tentative conclusions. It seemed that in their early composing behavior, these children did not verbalize the graphic representation of alphabet letters as writing. It was more of a mechanical exercise described with the same vocabulary they used to characterize drawing. Conversely, words were termed "writing" from the start. Perhaps the children already knew the difference between letter and word, form and function. When constructing isolated

alphabet letters they weren't writing messages. This use
of terminology could also have been modeling of adult
speech patterns. As the composing behavior gained
sophistication, so did the terminology. When the children
spelled, they said "spell." When the messages took on
complexity, the terminology was more and more accurately
and precisely applied. The researcher's constant verbali-
zation and modeling of terms may have helped refine the
children's terminology.

Summary

The structured composing episodes proved to be a
valuable medium for the investigation of the children's
graphic linguistic awareness. The sessions also served
to encourage development in this area. The children
verbalized freely about their actions and thoughts as
they generated their own writing and drawing.

Graphic linguistic awareness was defined by way of
a system of classification which included letter aware-
ness, word awareness, spelling awareness, print awareness,
and the terminology the children verbalized for their own
acts of composing. The categorization of behaviors
evolved through careful scrutiny of the verbal and non-
verbal activities of the children that appeared in the
videotapes of the composing episodes.

The children began the series of composing episodes
scribbling and writing mock words, and employing the

appropriate terminology for these actions. They displayed an interest in alphabet letters, but wrote them more often than they talked about them. They paid more attention to alphabet letters in conjunction with words than they did to alphabet letters is isolation. Concern was expressed that written letters be properly constructed.

Terry, Laurel, and Amy expressed a great deal of interest in words. Again, the active behavior of writing a word was favored over the passive behavior of discussing words. Names were a constant source of interest and excitement. Mock words were written and were considered a viable means of communication.

Behaviors relating to spelling increased during the course of the study. An awareness of the concept of spelling grew as did the actual spelling of names and words.

The children displayed their print awareness frequently and in many forms. They increasingly spoke of writing with appropriate terminology. As this talk of writing increased, talk about drawing decreased.

The children were vividly aware of their audience for their graphic communication. When no audience was immediately apparent, the graphic linguistic awareness displayed was at a minimum.

Pictures and print were read consistently throughout the investigation. The children shared their reading

and writing constantly and asked for assistance in reading
pictures and print. The research situation was one of
intense interaction surrounding the generation of graphic
representation.

The construction of alphabet letters was not considered
writing by the children. The construction of names was
termed "writing" from the onset of the study. As the
children's skills grew, so did the appropriateness of their
verbalizations to discuss these skills.

This investigation showed consistently that the
number of instances of graphic linguistic awareness
generated was a function of the composing setting. Appen-
dix B contains a tabulation of the mean number of
occurrences of elements of graphic linguistic awareness
in episodes with personal communication and books (Table
10). When a purposeful, personal communication was the
focal point of the session, evidences of graphic linguistic
awareness displayed were numerous and complex. When the
activity was not a form of personal communication that
was to be delivered to or used by the audience, graphic
linguistic awareness displayed was reduced and more
primitive.

CHAPTER VI
NATURE AND FUNCTION OF ORAL INTERACTION
WHILE COMPOSING

T: I'm hungry and I'm finished!
A: I'm hungry and I'm finished!
L: I'm hungry and I'm not finished!

As the study progressed, it became evident that the interaction among the participants in the episodes was a factor in both the development of composing behaviors and the verbalization of graphic linguistic awareness. An early attempt at composing with a single child (Episode 2) proved unsatisfactory. The children who participated wanted to spend a short time on task, composed only with great urging, and displayed very little graphic linguistic awareness. When the 3 children composed together they remained at the composing table for a minimum of 45 minutes. Only on 2 occasions did a child leave the area early.

As Chapters IV and V have shown, a considerable amount of data pertinent to both the composing process and graphic linguistic awareness was generated when this small group approach was used. The videotapes were again analyzed and interactions among the 3 children and the researcher were extracted.

These interactions were then considered in 2 ways. First, the nature of the oral interaction while composing

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was examined. The occurrences of a verbal interaction among the 3 children and between each child and the researcher were charted for 2 sessions (Episodes 3 and 15). The interactions were then classified by type in 5 categories which emerged from the data.

Next, the function of the oral interaction was analyzed. Interactive behavior from 2 other composing sessions (Episodes 4 and 14) were examined. A framework for categorizing the purpose of each of the interactions was constructed. The interactions from the 2 videotapes were then classified according to function.

A discussion of these two analyses follows. Some descriptive narrative was drawn from other episodes to illustrate and clarify the categorization.

Nature of Oral Interaction While Composing

The two videotapes considered in this analysis were Episode 3 (Thanksgiving placecard, 80 minutes in length), and Episode 15 (personal letters, 60 minutes in length). These 2 sessions were chosen because it was felt that selection of an episode that occurred at both the beginning and at the end of the study was appropriate. Episode 3 was the first session to utilize both the group situation and a definite task. Its design resulted from analysis of Episode 1 (initial exploration of materials in a group) and Episode 2 (single child experience which

involved a definite communication). Episode 15 was the
last session to occur that followed the same format
originating in Episode 3. (Episode 16 involved the use
of word cards in making Mother's Day cards.)

The distribution of interactive behaviors in the 2
tapes considered is very similar. It had been thought,
at the onset of the study, that perhaps the children
would interact with the researcher less and less and with
each other more and more as the sessions progressed. This
was not the case in examining these 2 episodes.

Both sessions had as their topic meaningful and pur-
poseful communication. The longer session, Episode 3,
contained 322 interactions and Episode 15 contained 255.
Behaviors indicating the nature of interactions which
occurred were classified into 4 different areas: questions,
answers/responds, tells/shares, and takes a break (see
Tables 6 and 7). A description of each of the areas
follows.

Questions

Most of the questions asked pertained to the topic
at hand and were directed to the researcher. Amy was the
most frequent questioner, often asking about construction
and form.

Occasionally the children would play guessing games
with their composing.

TABLE 6
Nature of Oral Interaction While Composing
Episode 3: Thanksgiving Placecards

Nature of Interaction	Terry to				Laurel to				Amy to				Total
	L	A	N	All	T	A	N	All	L	T	N	All	
Questions	3	0	6	0	3	0	9	0	2	4	18	0	45
Answers/Responds	6	2	26	0	9	3	12	0	5	2	18	0	83
Tells/Shares	3	5	45	12	6	6	8	11	2	6	46	17	167
Takes a Break	0	0	3	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	20	0	27
Total	12	7	80	14	18	9	31	11	9	12	102	17	322

Time of Episode: 80 minutes

TABLE 7

Nature of Oral Interaction While Composing
Episode 15: Personal Letters

Nature of Interaction	Terry to				Laurel to				Amy to				Total
	L	A	N	All	T	A	N	All	L	T	N	All	
Questions	0	1	9	0	2	1	8	1	0	1	3	1	27
Answers/responds	4	2	16	0	0	0	11	0	0	4	11	0	48
Tells/shares	3	3	41	2	4	0	18	6	4	6	40	14	141
Takes a break	0	1	4	0	0	2	2	2	1	0	20	7	39
Total	7	7	70	2	6	3	39	9	5	11	74	22	255

Time of episode: 60 minutes

```
L:   What did I make, Terry?
T:   You maked a hand.  (smiles)
L:   No, a turkey!  And what's in the
     middle of it?  (T shrugs)
A:   A face!  A face!
N:   Is it a face?
L:   No.
T:   Is it an i?  (discussion had been centering
     around the letter "i").
L:   No.  It's a turkey made out of a hand.
```

Answers/Responds

The children responded freely to questions asked
and statements made. Often one question received multiple
answers.

```
L:   (drawing a monster picture)  We don't like
     monsters, do we?
T:   Yes!  We do!  I do.
A:   Yeah, 'cause Terry's a boy.  Boys like
     monsters.  They think they're neat.
T:   I don't like monsters.  I thought you
     said . . . animals.
L:   Yuk!  We don't like monsters, do we?
A:   (dramatically) cause monsters live in a
     case and . . . eat you up.
L:   I'll eat you up!
```

Tells/Shares

The tells/shares category is the one in which most
of the interactions fall by far. The children constantly
communicated in this mode. They announced, showed,
offered advice, and commented on task 167 times in Episode
3 and 141 times in Episode 15.

```
A:   (starts to color pictures she has drawn)
     I'm coloring this butterfly different
     colors and it's going to take a good
     long time . . . Now it's not a butterfly
     but it's something that you . . . You
     know what it is . . . My Mommy!  (A laughs)
     I'm making my Mommy as a butterfly!  (T & A
     laugh).
```

Takes a Break

Not all talk was relevant to the composing episodes. Occasionally the children would take a break from their composing activities and chat with the researcher and each other about people and happenings outside of the research situation. Amy took most of her breaks from composing in this manner.

> A: . . . And it's fun because it's . . .
> doesn't feel like you're moving at
> all. It just feels like you're standing
> still. And it's an airplane and airplanes
> are just . . . going everywhere . . .
> standing still . . . and fun ride. Once I
> went on an airplane. And we had our Mary
> Janes on and velvet dress. It was so pretty!

Amy was the most prolific verbalizer of the 3 children. She interacted with the researcher more than Terry and Laurel and took unrelated verbal breaks most often. Amy talked to Terry more often than to Laurel and announced frequently to the group as a whole. Terry also had a great many interactions with the researcher, partly due to the fact that he is her son. He talked with Amy slightly more often than with Laurel. Laurel had the fewest verbal interactions of the 3 children. She talked most often with the researcher and interacted with Terry more than with Amy.

By far, for all the children, most of the interactions fell into the tells/shares category (308 times for both episodes considered). The children responded to a question (131 times) more often than they initiated one (72 times). They took a total of 66 breaks from their composing.

Functions of Oral Interaction While Composing

The functions of the oral interactions were considered
in the light of 2 videotaped composing sessions. Episode
4 (letters to Santa, 60 minutes in length) and Episode 14
(individual books, 45 minutes in length) were observed and
the behavior charted as to the role the interaction per-
formed (see Tables 8 and 9).

The 2 episodes considered were vastly different in
orientation, composing behavior, and graphic linguistic
awareness. Episode 4 involved purposeful and personal
communication with an obvious audience and a deliverable
message. Episode 14 evolved around individual books.
The evidences of graphic linguistic awareness were very
few and the graphic representation was almost totally
drawing.

These 2 sessions were chosen for investigation for
2 reasons. One, they occur near the beginning and near
the end of the investigation. Two, they were chosen
precisely because of their diversity. It was hypothesized
that the oral interactions displayed are a product of the
situation in which they occur. A discussion of the func-
tions performed by the oral interaction displayed in the
2 sessions follows.

TABLE 8

Functions of Oral Interation While Composing
Episode 4: Letters to Santa

Functions	Terry	Laurel	Amy	Total T,L,A	Nancye
Planning	1	0	5	6	0
Discussing materials	4	3	6	13	5
Dictating a message	1	1	3	5	7
Questioning					
Asking for assistance	7	2	3	12	3
Asking for permission	3	3	10	16	1
Asking about drawing/writing	5	1	1	7	2
Asking for an audience	1	0	0	1	0
Asking for feedback	0	0	1	1	0
Responding to question	6	20	6	32	12
Commanding or directing	2	1	0	3	9
Announcing	4	2	5	11	0
Explaining	6	6	11	23	28
Evaluating and revising					
Giving feedback	1	2	6	9	10
Challenging/correcting	7	2	0	9	0
Praising	0	2	0	2	10
Sharing work	9	12	3	24	0
Revising	1	2	2	5	0
Offering assistance	4	0	0	4	12
Being responsive to another	2	1	1	4	34
Expressing frustration	1	0	0	1	0
Unrelated comment	0	2	5	7	1
Unrelated question	3	1	3	7	2

Time of episode: 60 minutes

TABLE 9

Functions of Oral Interaction While Composing
Episode 14: Individual Books

Functions	Terry	Laurel	Amy	Total T,L,A	Nancye
Planning	1	0	1	2	0
Discussing materials	12	8	9	29	0
Dictating a message	1	6	0	7	4
Questioning					
Asking for assistance	0	0	0	0	0
Asking for permission	1	0	0	1	0
Asking about drawing/writing	1	1	4	6	2
Asking for an audience	0	0	5	0	0
Asking for feedback	4	0	2	6	0
Responding to question	4	1	3	8	2
Commanding or directing	1	4	0	5	10
Announcing	6	2	2	10	0
Explaining	4	2	8	14	14
Evaluating and revising					
Giving feedback	4	1	2	7	7
Challenging/correcting	2	2	1	5	0
Praising	0	0	0	0	6
Sharing work	12	2	8	22	0
Revising	0	0	0	0	3
Offering assistance	2	0	2	2	3
Being responsive to another	2	0	10	12	27
Expressing frustration	0	1	0	1	0
Unrelated comment	13	5	25	43	8
Unrelated question	1	4	2	7	5

Time of episode: 40 minutes

Planning

The children frequently used oral language in their composing processes to plan. They did this both before they began and as they composed. They planned what they would write as well as what they would draw. Very little planning took place in Episode 14 (making a book). More purposeful means of communication (letter, card) seemed to elicit more verbal planning.

>   A: (drawing) That's got it. Now I can
>   make . . . (surveys drawing) What can
>   I make? . . . That guy needs to have
>   feet!

Describing Materials

The children's interaction frequently centered around the materials they were provided. They often verbalized their choice of color, size of marker, etc. This talk appeared to serve as a "settling-in" activity for the children as they prepared to compose. It also provided breaks. Since preschool children are just learning colors and size relationships, much of this type of talk may have served the function of clarifying their thinking about these concepts.

>   L: I want you to write in purple.
>   N: All right.
>   L: Where's purple? Here it is.
>   A: (pointing at pens) Middle-sized,
>   fattest, skinniest. Right?
>   N: Right. All kinds of pens.
>   A: Middle-sized, fattest, skinniest.

There was more talk about materials in Episode 14 (books) than in Episode 4 (letters). In general, there seemed

to be more discussion of this nature in the drawing activities.

Dictating a Message

Oral language enabled the child to compose a message through dictation to the researcher. Since these children all paced their dictation from the beginning, dictated talk was distinctly different from other talk. They also dictated their messages in "written language," differentiating it from talk.

    N: I wrote Dear Santa. What else would you like me to say?
    L: I'm . . . am . . . going . . . going . . . to . . . leave you some . . . some cookies and some toys.

Questioning and Responding to a Question

The children asked questions for a number of reasons. They asked for assistance in the letters to Santa episode, but not in the book episode.

    T: Mom, how do you do a Easter basket?
    A: I'll tell you. I'll make it. I'll make it.
    L: How do you do an Easter basket?
    N: I think Amy's going to show you.

The children, particularly Amy, asked for permission. Since Amy was in school, she may have been more oriented toward asking for permission.

    A: (to N) Is this all right if I color in here? In my snake letter? Good. 'Cause I don't want you to think it's ugly.

They inquired about the writing and drawing they observed around them.

```
L:   I made a G.
N:   Laurel!
L:   And an E!
T:   And an E?  Where's the E?
L:   (to T)  This is a G.
T:   (to L)  Where's the E?
L:   Nowhere.  It's right there.
T:   You didn't make an E?
L:   No, I was just trickin'.
```

Terry asked for an audience one time.

```
T:   Mom, come over here when I'm making.
```

Terry and Amy each asked for feedback on their compositions,

"How do you like my . . . ?"

The children also used their oral language to respond

to questions. Laurel responded to many questions in the

letters to Santa episode. Most of the questions were from

Nancye to clarify something Laurel had said.

```
N:   (following a discussion of y's found on the
     end of names)  What's that on the end of
     Laurel's name, Amy?
A:   A one.
N:   Not a one.
T:   An i.
N:   Not an i.  What is it Laurel?
L:   l.
N:   An L.  A lower case L looks like a
     one and an i doesn't it?
A:   Except an i has a dot (makes dotting
     motion in the air with marker).
```

In the 2 tapes considered for analysis, much less

questioning and responding occurred in Episode 14

(individual books) than in Episode 4 (letters to Santa).

However, in Episode 3 (Thanksgiving placecards) discussed

earlier in this chapter, questioning and responding were

frequent. This may counterindicate a trend in these

behaviors, and rather point to the effect of the activity

on questioning and responding.

Commanding or Directing

One of the functions of oral language employed by the children was that of issuing commands and giving directions. This type of interaction was most often, but not always, positive.

```
L:  (closely supervising T's coloring in)
    O . . . .
T:  Don't!
L:  Terry's saying "don't!"
T:  She's saying the words and I don't
    want her to.
N:  You want to spell it yourself and
    she's telling you how to spell it?
T:  Yes, but I don't want . . .
```

Announcing

The children frequently announced their ideas and actions. Often these announcements were directed to the group as a whole.

```
T:  I maked a B!  I'm going to color my B.
    (to A)  Can you make a B like mine?
    Look at my B!
```

Explaining

An explanation of the product or process involved often accompanied the children's composing. Far less explaining was seen in Episode 14 (individual books) than in Episode 4 (letters to Santa). Amy explained more often than Terry or Laurel, perhaps because she was the oldest child.

```
L:  I made a watermelon.
T:  (leans over) Where?  Where's a watermelon?
L:  Here.  Now, now I need to color it in.
T:  Is watermelons green?
A:  Watermelons are any color.
```

Evaluating and Revising

The children actively expressed their thoughts about another's work. They frequently gave feedback to the composer on what they observed.

```
A:  Now, I'm going to make clouds.
T:  (looking over) And it's raining.  And
    it's raining on him.
L:  (leaning over) Is it raining?
T:  Yes.  Mom, look at it's raining.
```

They challenged and corrected print and drawings they thought were inaccurate.

```
L:  Look at my L.
T:  It's a V, you silly.
L:  It's an L.
T:  That is a V.
```

The children's oral interaction occasionally was in the form of praise.

```
T:  (to A) Look what's, Amy, look what Laurel's
    making for you!  (smiles)
A:  That's my best card I've ever seen.  (smiles)
```

Sharing work orally was a consistent occurrence in the composing episodes. It was not reserved for a completed product, but was displayed throughout the composing process.

The children also made revisions orally and changed what they were making as they composed. They verbalized their control over the product. That there were no revisions in the book episode may indicate that the children were less emotionally involved in the outcome of the session.

```
T:  Mom, I writed a square A.
N:  A square A.
T:  Yes.
N:  Oh, I see.  Yes.  You made an A
    and it looks like a square.
T:  Now it's a window.
```

The children verbally offered assistance to another.

This assistance was most often accepted and appreciated.

```
T:  Mom, how do you do a Easter basket?
A:  I'll tell you.  I can make it.  I'll
    make it.
L:  How do you do an Easter basket?
N:  I think Amy's going to show you.
```

Being Responsive to Another

Oral interactions among the children were a means of

being responsive to the verbalizations and actions of

others.

```
L:  (to A) I need that pencil.
A:  I'll finish with it.
T:  I need, I need that pencil.
L:  This pencil, Terry?  (holds out pencil)
T:  Yes.  (takes pencil)  Here.  (gives L
    marker).
L:  Thank you, Terry.
T:  You're welcome.  Just need it for
    a little bit.
```

Expressing Frustration

Occasionally, the children would express frustration

at not being able to construct a symbol or representation

the way they wanted. The frustration was quickly resolved,

largely due to the verbal interaction surrounding the

incident.

```
T:  Oh, shoot!
L:  (to T) What?  What, Terry?
T:  (is trying to write his name)  That's
    upside down now!
```

N: First you started to write your name and
    you ran into the word love. You didn't
    have enough room. And now you said it's
    upside down! (T & N laugh)

Unrelated Comments and Questions

Oral interaction was a technique the children used

frequently to take a break from the rigors of composing.

The comments were social and personal in nature.

T: Mom, my foot itches.
N: Well, pull your shoe off. You can
    scratch it.
T: Anyway, I have a rubber band in my
    shoe.
N: Oh, dear me! That'll do it every time.
T: (tapping A) Do you know what just fell
    out of my shoe? (smiles) A rubber band!

Often the unrelated chatter involved questions as

well, and involved the whole group.

L: One day I had a lollipop that somebody
    shared with me from in their trick-or-
    treat pumpkin, and I put a marker in my
    mouth.
N: Oooh.
L: Icky.
N: That was icky.
L: Yes.
N: Instead of the lollipop. You got them
    mixed up.
A: What color? What color?
L: I don't know.
A: Did you forget?
L: See. Icky. Icky.
T: What color was the lollipop?
L: Green.
A: Then it must have been a green magic
    marker!

The number of unrelated comments and questions in the

videotapes analyzed differed considerably. In Episode 4

(letters to Santa) there were 17, while in Episode 14

(individual books) there were 63 interactions unrelated to the composing episode.

The functions of oral interaction considered in this investigation were numerous and diverse. Most commonly, in Episode 4 (letters to Santa) the children responded to questions (32 times), shared work (24 times), explained (23 times), asked for permission (16 times), discussed materials (13 times) and asked for assistance (12 times).

In Episode 14 (individual books), the functions most frequently performed by the children's interactions were: making unrelated comments and asking unrelated questions (63 times), discussing materials (29 times), sharing work (22 times), explaining (14 times) and announcing (10 times).

In both episodes, the children shared and explained their work often. However, in Episode 14 (individual books), there was far more unrelated chatter and discussion of materials. Episode 14 did not involve purposeful, personal communication and included far more drawing than writing. In Episode 4, a personal letter was being written to Santa and interaction centered more around technical questions of form, assistance in letter construction, and discussion of process.

If the interactions these children exhibited are typical, educators may want to take note. If the purpose of the teacher is to elicit on task interaction that revolves around the composing activity, it seems a purposeful, personal communication should serve as a focus.

If socialization, drawing, and perhaps creativity are the aim, the more general activity may be more appropriate.

Role of the Researcher

The nature and function of the oral interactions of the researcher were considered in light of the 4 video- tapes cited in the previous analyses. The researcher's role was a vital one to the composing episodes. The children consistently directed questions and comments to her more than to each other.

The functions of her interactions were seen primarily as facilitative: being responsive, explaining, offering assistance, commanding and directing (usually observed at the beginning of the session), giving feedback, and praising. These functions in this research situation, served to elicit a great number of behaviors. The pur- pose of the study was to bring to light as many composing behaviors and as much graphic linguistic awareness as possible. More praise may have been used in this pursuit than would commonly be used in a classroom situation. However, the importance of a responsive environment for children of this age was seen as a vital factor in this investigation and is seen as a vital factor in the pre- school curriculum.

Summary

An examination of the nature and function of oral interaction in the composing episodes reaffirmed its vital role. The sessions were active, dynamic, and alive with language. It was hard to relate to the fact that composing in school settings is so often a silent and passive experience.

The children of the study were enthusiastic and eager verbalizers. Their frequent interactions enabled the researcher to attempt a description of the type of interactions that occurred, the role these interactions played in the composing processes, and the function of the adult in the setting. The classifications of interactions that resulted were considered with an eye toward recommendations for implementation in preschool curricula as well as for future research.

In order to illustrate the nature of the oral language that characterized the composing episodes, verbal interactions were extracted from 2 videotapes. These interactions were channeled into categories in order to operationally define their nature. Interactions were further charted to indicate which participants interacted most frequently.

Data revealed that the children verbally interacted with the researcher more frequently than with each other. Most of the children's verbalizations were those of

initiation: telling, sharing, announcing. They responded to questions, and took verbal breaks from composing as well.

Two other videotapes were analyzed to aid in a description of the functions that the oral language served in the composing episodes. The oral language extracted from these 2 sessions was found to perform 22 separate functions. Verbalization accompanied every step of the composing process from planning, to sharing, revising, and evaluating.

The function of the interaction was dependent on the situation in which it occurred. In the session that had to do with meaningful communication, more oral interactions were on task and related to the composing process. In the session that revolved around making a book, a large part of the verbal interaction was unrelated, with few questions and comments about the composition in evidence.

The researcher's role in the episodes was a crucial one. Analysis showed that she most often was responsive and explaining in her interactions. She also directed the activity and responded to questions. She offered assistance, praise, and gave feedback as well.

Implications of these findings are clear. Previous chapters (IV and V) have illustrated the wealth of composing behavior and graphic linguistic awareness that was generated when the children were allowed to interact verbally in a small group with a responsive adult.

Specialists in the area of composing speak of writing as a solitary, isolated act. For adults, isolated writing is probably a fact. But for very young children the areas of composing, oral interaction, and graphic linguistic awareness are so closely meshed that separating them would be artificial and detrimental.

Very young children (ages 2-4) must be allowed to explore all avenues of expression and communication and must be encouraged as they do so. The series of composing episodes described in this study enabled children to explore graphically, verbally, and socially as well.

CHAPTER VII
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

      L: Know what these marks mean?
      N: No, what?
      L: The end.

This study involved research into the composing processes and graphic linguistic awareness of 3 very young children, ages 2-4. Chapter VII presents a discussion of each of these areas as well as of the oral interaction of the children during the composing process. Implications for research on the composing process, graphic linguistic awareness, and oral interaction while composing are provided. In addition, implications for preschool curriculum research are presented.

The Composing Process

The 16 structured composing episodes provided numerous insights into the composing processes of the 3 children studied. The setting in which 3 children interacted with a responsive adult proved conducive to the generation of writing, dictating, and drawing. The children came willingly to the composing episodes and remained on task for extended periods of time (35 minutes or more).

Oral interaction was constant in the sessions. The children verbalized extensively throughout every phase of the composing process, revealing clues as to their perception of their composing behaviors as well as their graphic linguistic awareness.

The influence of peers on each child's behavior was significant. Free interchange with the other children served to allow each child to show off, fool around, offer and ask for help, assert him/herself, experiment, learn and respond. Frustration appeared to be lessened and transitions from one skill level to another, i.e., from mock words to traditional messages, seemed to be eased due to the small group situation.

As the investigation progressed, it became clear that a number of behaviors typified the composing episodes. The children observed the processes and products of others closely. They actively discussed, praised, challenged, and evaluated what they saw. They often borrowed ideas, elaborating on them in their own compositions. The children consistently watched the researcher as she wrote for themselves and for each other.

The children called attention to their efforts by showing and sharing them with the group. They asked for assistance and direction, feedback and praise.

The children displayed a wide range of writing and drawing behaviors throughout the 6 months of the study.

They scribbled, wrote mock letters and words, traced and colored-in print and drawings, discovered alphabet letters in their drawings, constructed isolated letters, copied letters and words, wrote words and phrases, spelled, and read. Frequency of occurrence of each of these behaviors were tallied for each child at each session and totaled for the 3 children per session and across sessions. A sequential pattern of development was not evident. They composed with the full range of behaviors throughout the study, although mock letters and scribbling occurred more at the beginning, and spelling and reading were more prevalent at the end of the investigation. Their hand-writing became more legible and writing more conventional (left to right with proper spacing). Their drawings ranged from Lowenfeld's (1975) controlled scribbles to preschematic drawings.

The compositions (dictation/writing/drawing) generated were a function of the topic. When the episode centered around meaningful and personal communication and the audience was immediate, the process included more complex composing behaviors and more evidences of graphic linguistic awareness. When the activity was more general and no audience was specified, these behaviors were greatly reduced. Episodes involving making greeting cards and writing letters produced far more writing and graphic linguistic awareness than did sessions involving

the making of books. Findings conflicted with Kroll's (1973b) findings in which he states that children cannot purposefully communicate until they have a sense of audience which develops after they have attained adequate skill in spelling, punctuation, writing, etc. to make communication fluent.

The children displayed a need to "take a break" from their composing. Behaviors which can be interpreted as breaks consisted of physical movement, social chatter, giggling, watching, listening, playing with the materials, graphic doodling (tracing and coloring in of their message), and playing guessing games with what they had composed. This "off task" behavior may have served as a release for the children from the rigors of composing.

A 2-step composing process emerged as the investigation progressed, evident in 3 of the last 5 sessions. The children would, following the dictation of the message, write for a prolonged period with few breaks from their task. Following this, the children would draw and socialize. The process was repeated if more than one product was produced. Toward the end of the sessions, the children spelled words aloud as they dictated them or wrote them independently.

An interest in the construction of the children's own and others' names preceded an interest in other words. While this fascination with names seems obvious to

parents and preschool teachers, it seldom forms the basis
of an introduction to writing in day care or kindergarten.
The children displayed every form of composing behavior
in relation to names and their prevalence in the episodes
may have increased motivation and time spent on task.
Since names have unique visual appearance (begin with
upper case letters, often end in "y"), their appearance
in compositions seemed to enhance the evidence of graphic
linguistic awareness.

The segmentation of the composing process into pre-
writing, writing, and postwriting phases seemed to be an
artificial categorization when applied to this study.
These 3 children planned, composed, analyzed, shared,
revised all at the same time. It would have been im-
possible to separate and polarize the behaviors for the
sake of analysis, as has been done in research with older
children (Britton, 1978).

The composing episodes were a responsive environment
in which the children maintained a sense of control. Their
efforts were never rejected, and they freely tested,
reworked, and reevaluated their emerging roles as com-
posers. This atmosphere may have enhanced their sense
of competence.

Although there were many similarities among them,
these children also had unique features as composers.
Terry composed quickly and verbally. Laurel composed
slowly, meticulously, and less verbally. Amy composed

socially, moving on and off task more than Laurel and Terry. Terry was a more mobile composer than the girls. In order for composing to be productive for these children it needed:

1) a clear purpose of communication;

2) an immediate audience for the product; and

3) a personal and well-defined function.

When the above criteria were met, the composing process was a rich and meaningful experience for all who participated in it.

Graphic Linguistic Awareness

An examination of the 16 composing episodes revealed the effect of the child's active role of generating graphic representation on graphic linguistic awareness. Each phase of the composing process was accompanied by behavior that allowed the researcher to describe and evaluate graphic linguistic awareness.

Graphic linguistic awareness was operationally defined to include letter awareness, word awareness, spelling awareness, and print awareness. The categorization of the children's behavior emerged from the graphic linguistic awareness generated in relation to the composing process.

The children demonstrated that they preferred to actively compose graphic representation rather than answer direct questions about their graphic linguistic awareness.

Through direct observation of the composing act and free verbal interaction before, during, and after the composing process, it was possible to obtain more elaborate information than by asking the children to respond to print.

The children showed an inclination toward whole words as a means of communication, rather than isolated alphabet letters. This observation is based on total frequency counts of these behaviors across the 16 episodes for all children. The children wrote isolated alphabet letters 21 times in the 16 composing episodes. They wrote or copied words or parts of words, wrote names, or wrote alphabet letters in conjunction with words (i.e., T for Terry) 58 times during the investigation. Names of the children and of family members were useful for the focus of composing and subsequent indication of graphic linguistic awareness.

A great deal of graphic linguistic awareness was revealed in these sessions. The amount of graphic linguistic awareness was a function of the composing episode. When the activity was personal and purposeful (such as a letter or greeting card), the graphic linguistic awareness was abundant. When the focus of the episode was general and the audience for the communication was not immediately apparent, graphic linguistic awareness displayed was reduced and more primitive.

The children consistently read and shared pictures and print (a total of 392 times) throughout the

investigation. The free interchange of the small group situation appeared to allow for constant reaffirmation of the children's growing awareness of graphic linguistic awareness.

Terminology for the act of composing became more appropriate and accurate as the behavior became more complex. Tallies of the behaviors across the 16 sessions indicate a wide range of graphic linguistic awareness which progressed from the naming of scribbling and mock words, to the spelling and reading of messages. They interacted intensely with their graphic communication and verbalized as they did so. The composing episode was seen as a useful environment for the observation and analysis of graphic linguistic awareness in children ages 2-4.

Nature and Function of Oral Interaction While Composing

Oral interaction within the composing episode played a pivotal role. It was through oral interaction that the composing processes of the children were chronicled. Oral language was the major mode of expression through which graphic linguistic awareness was examined. In addition, oral interaction served numerous other functions.

Talk, so often missing in children's experiences with composing in structured situations, was both initiating and responsive in nature. The functions served by the children's interactions were many and varied, ranging

from planning, questioning, evaluating, explaining, praising, and challenging to seemingly unrelated social chatter. The role of a responsive adult in the episodes was seen as a critical one by examination of the numerous interactions between the researcher and the children. She served to explain, respond, direct, praise, and give feedback to the children's composing efforts and graphic linguistic awareness.

The nature and function of the children's oral interaction was a product of the episode in which it was generated. When a meaningful, personal activity was proposed, oral language centered around the communication, with much questioning and talk of form, purpose, and audience. When the composing episode was concerned with a general theme, such as a book with a nonspecific audience, there was a great deal of "off-task" chatter and discussion of materials.

The observation of the children in this study revealed that the composing process, graphic linguistic awareness, and oral interaction were tightly interwoven. None were isolated and regarded as an entity. Consideration of all was necessary for a total picture of the children (ages 2-4) and their entrance into a world of oral and visible language.

Implications for Research on Composing

Research on the composing processes of children ages 2-4 is in its infancy. This study was proposed to discover appropriate methodology for looking at behaviors with such children.

The technique of structuring composing episodes with a small group of children and a responsive adult proved to be a positive entrance into the field for building a theory of early composing behavior. Data generated in this manner were extensive. The 3 children involved in the study displayed wide ranges of composing skills and verbalized these at great length. The researcher was able, given the rich nature of the composing episodes, to describe a picture of the development of 3 children, ages 2, 3, and 4 at the study's onset, through many varied composing experiences.

Previous research on composing has tended to focus on an examination of the final product as a tool for conducting research. Data presented in Chapter II document the difficulties of this type of evaluation for children of these ages. An examination of a card one child composed in Episode 4 (letters to Santa) illustrates the limitations of defining process with an appraisal of the product (see Figure D). This card was produced with great effort and was accompanied by many composing

Dear Santa,
    I'm going to write your
name.
            Love,
                Terry

Figure D

behaviors and a great deal of graphic linguistic awareness. It was read at the close of the session as a personal communication to Santa complete with Santa's name. The complexity of the process would be lost in restricting observation only to the final product. Future research into early composing will want to pay close attention to the process that surrounds the actual creation of product.

This study suggests that in order for children to generate meaningful communication and for the composing atmosphere to be a motivating one, it is helpful if the task offered must be one in which the child is personally and directly involved. Having an immediate audience and an obvious purpose also seem important. Such meaningful and purposeful communication can take the form of personal letters, greeting cards and placecards. Activities involving names are particularly useful as a generation of composition. Research into a method of instruction for writing using personal communication and familiar names as a core may be called for.

A setting conducive to composing research needs to allow for free verbal interchange and permit the children to go off task for a "break." These breaks were found to be necessary and vital parts of the composing process. Further research might further define the role of breaks in the composing process.

Findings presented in this study pertain to these 3 children only. Further research is needed to determine if the composing behaviors these children exhibited recur in other populations. Research is further needed to take this approach beyond verbal middle-class children and a laboratory setting.

Several additional questions merit attention by researchers:

1) What is the function of coloring-in? Two of these children repeatedly traced and colored in both pictures and artwork. Coloring-in appeared to serve numerous functions: taking a break from more arduous composing tasks, completing a product, playing with print, re-affirming growing awareness of print, and defining space and print differences. A followup study is needed to determine the function of coloring-in behavior.

Related to this question, studies are needed which investigate the relationships between early writing and drawing. Art theorists (Lowenfeld, 1975; Kellog, 1969) have described "stages" of art development. Theorists need to bridge the gap between writing and drawing and determine if there are parallel "stages" of writing development. These children appeared to scribble in both writing and drawing at the same time. Their writings went all over the page at the same time the drawings did. They had difficulty writing books when they were not able

to draw schematic pictures that told a story which may
have as much to do with their lack of interest as the
question of immediate audience. There appear to be more
links between children's development in art and in writing
than have been investigated to date.

2) How does the composing process change depending
upon the writing implement used? Is there more revision
with erasers? These children tended to use large markers
for drawing and when they were given large pieces of
paper. Thin markers were by far the most popular tool
for writing. Pencils were used when the children antici-
pated revisions in spelling. Does the writing implement
supplied tend to influence composing or, given a choice,
will children select utensils appropriate to their pur-
poses?

3) How does the composing process of an individual
child vary when he composes in a large group, small group,
by himself, and by himself with a responsive adult? The
children in this study composed for relatively longer
periods of time than would normally be provided in a home
or classroom. Their composing processes were highly
interactive. A study is needed where the composing
processes of the same child is investigated across
several types of composing sessions. Since so much oral
language was directed to and from the adult, it is
hypothesized that composing sessions of small groups with

a responsive adult may be longer, more verbal, and more influenced by peers than other types of composing sessions.

Related to this question are 2 others. One is the effect of group size on the composing process. It is anticipated that in larger groups children's oral language might veer off task more than in smaller groups. Groups of 3 might be ideal for composing sessions for children ages 2 to 5. Similarly, an investigation is needed to determine if these research methodologies work equally well with older or less verbal children.

4) What is the impact of audience distance on the composing processes? These children were more integrally and emotionally involved when the audience was immediate. Schools rarely employ an immediate audience in writing curricula. Messages are rarely actually mailed. When the audience was somewhat distant (a distant relative), writing intensity was not maintained for 1 child in this study.

Implications for Research on Graphic Linguistic Awareness

Observing 3 children (ages 2-4) as they generated their own graphic representation proved to be a useful methodology for the observation and definition of graphic linguistic awareness. The structured composing episodes, which included a small group of children and a responsive

adult, generated abundant data to enable the researcher to define operationally the term graphic linguistic awareness. The categories of letter awareness, word awareness, spelling awareness, and print awareness emerged as a viable classification system for the children's oral and graphic behavior.

With a tentative definition of graphic linguistic awareness and a framework for graphic linguistic awareness research having been proposed, further investigation is now needed into the application of these tenets beyond the 3 children of the study. Graphic linguistic awareness, or more broadly metalinguistic awareness, is commonly thought of in terms of a response to a reading activity. This study illustrates the dynamic and active role writing and drawing can play in the assessment of graphic linguistic awareness. The proposed approach takes cues from children about their knowledge of the conventions of written language as they are involved in the process of actively creating graphic symbols.

Research now needs to move beyond these 3 children to refine and further define graphic linguistic awareness. More work needs to be done with small groups of children of these ages with an eye toward social, economic, and racial diversity. Research further needs to move from a laboratory setting to a preschool, day care, or home setting. Research is also needed to determine the function of graphic linguistic awareness in learning to read. These

children appeared to display graphic linguistic awareness
as they read and attempted to read both the pictures and
the print.

Additional questions were generated throughout the
course of the study:

1) How does the generation of print compare with
questions about print not of the child's own generation
as a vehicle for gathering graphic linguistic awareness
data from young children? This researcher periodically
asked the children about their print early in the study
and found that even when questioned about their own print,
these children revealed little graphic linguistic aware-
ness. Responses to direct questions such as "You'll see,"
and "I don't know," "Let me write what I'm making," and
"I'm not thinking it, I'm drawing it" were indicative
of responses to direct questioning during the composing
episodes.

2) What is the impact of television on graphic
linguistic awareness? Do children who watch Sesame
Street, for example, have more letter awareness and
less word awareness? The children in this study watched
little, if any, television. They also displayed a
definite orientation toward words.

3) What is the influence of school instruction on
graphic linguistic awareness? The children in this study
were more interested in sending messages than in learning

about alphabet letters. Children with more school experience may display different tendencies.

4) What are the roots of graphic linguistic awareness? Obviously, these children had acquired quite a bit before the study began. How? Studies of even younger children and their interactions with written language are needed to explore this area.

5) How do composing sessions help children acquire graphic linguistic awareness? The usefulness of the approach in this study to a program of instruction in graphic linguistic awareness needs to be examined. Clay's (1975) assumption that writing gives order to the children's encounters with written language needs to be further investigated.

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Implications for Research on Oral
Interaction While Composing

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The results of this study illustrate the active role of oral interaction in both the composing process and graphic linguistic awareness. It is now necessary to further study this complex role in order to refine the classifications of role and function presented here.

The notion that writing and drawing must be silent and solitary is widely held (Burgess & Burgess, 1973; King, 1980). This study illustrated that the most productive composition was accompanied by rich verbal interaction. Investigation now needs to move to studies in

comparison, composing with and without a component of verbal interaction.

Research also needs to be done with children who do not possess the verbal skills of the 3 children in this study. Will verbal interaction remain as a vital part of composing and will it ease transitions from skill to skill and reduce frustration as it appeared to in this study? Will the graphic linguistic awareness of the children be revealed, though the children are not as verbal as these children were? How does the size of the group affect the nature and function of talk during composing? Is there an ideal size for a composing group? Studies to come may give insight into these emergent questions.

Implications for Curriculum and Instruction Research

Although no generalizations or implications for curriculum practice can result directly from so limited a study, questions are raised that indicate areas for possible future research in the area of curriculum.

1) Would children ages 2-4 benefit if given the opportunity to experiment graphically as a regular part of the day care, preschool, and kindergarten curriculum? It may be that "prewriting"activities ought to be given as much attention as "prereading." The children in this study "read" repeatedly everything they wrote. Writing

for children may have as much payoff in preschool years as reading aloud to children has.

2) Does composing (drawing/writing) need to be seen as a solitary process? The children in this study, composing with a responsive adult, provided evidence to support the use of a small group as a worthwhile composing unit.

3) Does composing need to be seen as a silent activity? Talk was encouraged and fostered in this study. Verbalization chronicled every step of the composing process. Children can be encouraged to plan, share, and evaluate orally.

4) Are composing sessions that have communication as their obvious focus beneficial in day care, preschools and kindergartens? Communication that was meaningful, personal, and that had an obvious and immediate audience was preferable in this study to the "let's make a book" type of activity.

5) What function do breaks play in the composing processes of young children? The children considered here seemed to need a respite from their actions and resumed composing with enthusiasm. This may be obvious to anyone directly involved with small children, but often in instructional practice breaks are disallowed and children are told to stop the social chatter, and to finish their task. Perhaps breaks in the composing process ought not to be considered "off-task" behavior.

6)   What should the adult role be as a small group
of children compose? The researcher in this study re-
sponded to children's comments, directed the session,
offered to take dictation, evaluated and gave feedback
and appropriately praised the children's efforts.

7) Does choice of writing tools influence the com-
posing processes of young children? Thin markers were
the most popular choice of the children in this investi-
gation, and pencils with erasers assisted in making re-
visions. Fat markers were used primarily for drawing.

8) Is dictating individual messages preferable to
copying messages from the blackboard? Watching the con-
struction of letters and words seemed to provide these
children valuable clues in all phases of graphic linguistic
awareness. As the adult verbally expresses what he/she is
writing, the children appear to gain insight into oral and
written communication.

9) Is it helpful to provide an immediate audience
for composing activities? The children in this study
were more involved in composing when an immediate audience
was apparent. Greeting cards and letters that were
actually mailed were highly successful with the 3 children
in this investigation.

10) Is handwriting instruction more effective when
it is placed in the context of composing for communication
rather than in isolated drills and dittoes? The legibility

and speed with which these children wrote improved across the sessions with adult modeling and child-initiated talk about letter formation as the only apparent instructors.

11) Is it more beneficial to an early childhood curriculum to emphasize meaning units such as words, phrases, and messages, rather than isolated alphabet letters as units of instruction? The children in this study were clearly oriented toward reading and writing words. The making of alphabet letters was considered a mechanical task akin to drawing, not writing.

12) How should children be encouraged to share their compositions? What function does oral sharing serve in children's development of composing abilities? The sharing and showing of compositions in this investigation seemed to provide immediate feedback, increase graphic linguistic awareness, and increase a sense of self-as-composer.

13) Should children be encouraged to assist one another during the composing process? The children in this study obviously felt good about helping each other. The peer model provided another vehicle for learning about print.

14) How should the participating adult evaluate the children's work? Are criticism and correction functional? The children discussed here appeared to compose most freely in a responsive atmosphere. It would seem that

isolated skills that the adult feels needs instruction can be taken care of at another time, subsequent to the composing session.

15) How long should composing sessions be? The children in this study interacted with materials in a meaningful way for at least 45 minutes a session. While this large a block of time may not be possible for all children every day in a day care, preschool, kindergarten or even a home setting, flexible scheduling which will allow children enough time to complete their compositions appeared to be desirable for these children.

16) Does training teachers to observe children carefully as they compose enhance the writing curriculum and children's development? This study defined numerous behaviors not previously apparent which revealed information about the children's graphic linguistic awareness.

Summary

This study consisted of an investigation into the composing (dictating/writing/drawing) processes of 3 children ages 2, 3, and 4 at the onset of the study, and the graphic linguistic awareness evidenced as these children generated their own graphic representation. Sixteen structured composing episodes were conducted over a 6 month period, in which the children composed as a group with a responsive adult. Research methodology employed in the study was eclectic in design, involving

case study, observational, and ethnographic techniques.
Videotapes of the 16 sessions were transcribed and analyzed
by 2 coders to describe children's composing processes and
to graph and analyze their graphic linguistic awareness
and the nature and functions of their oral interaction
while composing.

The unique contribution of this study to research in
the area of composing was the development of a research
methodology for obtaining and analyzing data on the
composing processes of children ages 2-4. Previous re-
search has not studied children so young and appropriate
research methodologies had not been developed. The
group setting, together with the composing tasks and
adult direction and responsiveness, resulted in lengthy
sessions (45-80 minutes) of active composing on the part
of these 3 children. Other researchers have studied
children individually, most notably Harste et al. (1979)
and Graves (1975) who investigated the composing processes
of slightly older children. For the 3 children in this
study, the group sessions were productive research en-
vironments and analysis procedures yielded a large quan-
tity of data.

Secondarily, it was observed that the children
participated more actively in the composing process when
the activities were personal, purposeful, and communication
for an immediate audience (such as personal letters and

greeting cards) than when the audience was less well defined (group books).

The primary contribution of this study to the research literature in language awareness was likewise the development of a research setting and methodology conducive to assertaining the graphic linguistic awareness of children ages 2-4. That component of metalinguistic awareness which focuses on graphic representation and its meaning was termed graphic linguistic awareness. Whereas Sulzby (1978) advocated use of both the direct and the indirect question to assess children's metalinguistic awareness, the indirect observational data generated in this study lends support to the use of indirect methods for children of preschool age.

The study further contributes an operational definition of graphic linguistic awareness which emerged from observations of the 3 children as they composed. Graphic linguistic awareness was operationally defined to include letter awareness, word awareness, spelling awareness, and print awareness.

In the area of graphic linguistic awareness, some of the findings might have been anticipated, i.e., that children would be fascinated with each other's names. The quantity of graphic linguistic awareness displayed was an unexpected finding, as were the many diverse ways in which the awareness was demonstrated.

This study raised questions about viewing the composing process for young children as solitary and silent (Burgess & Burgess, 1973; King, 1980) and demonstrated the usefulness of the children's oral interactions both for gathering data about the children's graphic linguistic awareness and for enhancing the composing processes themselves. A schema of the functions of oral interaction while composing was developed.

Research in composing might utilize the group setting, composing strategies, and data analysis procedures developed for this study. Researchers might investigate the impact of an immediate audience and of purposeful, meaningful communication on the composing processes of children ages 2-4.

The term graphic linguistic awareness provides clarity to researchers of areas variously termed metalinguistic awareness, language awareness, and concepts of print. The operational definition offers a framework around which future studies can be designed. The amount of graphic linguistic awareness already obtained by the children in this study was substantial, indicating a need to explore the origins of graphic linguistic awareness with even younger children.

This investigation gives guidance to researchers in the areas of early childhood composing and linguistic awareness. It provides a theoretical construct around

which an early childhood writing curriculum might be developed and researched. Many questions were generated which provide direction for future research in these areas.

APPENDIX A
BEHAVIORS IN EPISODE 3 (THANKSGIVING PLACECARDS)

Terry

Terry entered the composing situation eagerly and
was seated immediately. He asked to be first in dictation,
but waited his turn. He watched the dictation of the girls
and watched as Laurel displayed her writing. He watched
closely as Nancye wrote and spelled his name on a place-
card.

Terry held his marker like a paintbrush and began to
scribble. Nancye said to the others that he was writing
and he smiled. Then, after looking at Amy and Laurel's
cards he said "Look at Laurel, Mom!" He started to pick
up her (Laurel's) card to show it to Nancye but Nancye
told him not to, because Laurel was working on it.

Terry watched Amy compose. Amy told Terry she might
want to use the purple after him. He responded with a
smile, "I'm going to use it all the time." (He later
shared.)

He showed Nancye his picture. When Nancye asked
what he did there, he said he didn't know and got back
to work. Laurel then asked Terry to look at her picture
and he looked.

Terry said, "I can write an N," showed and pointed "right here." When Nancye asked if it was a capital or lower case "N," he responded correctly.

Laurel asked Terry to look at her placecard. Terry responded, "That's good!" to Laurel.

Terry reached for a new marker and drew. He announced, "This is a wave." He showed the green marker to Nancye and to Laurel. He watched Laurel make a turkey by tracing around her hand.

He showed Nancye his card and announced that he was going to draw something. He announced that he "drawed an L."

Nancye showed his placecard to the girls and explained about the purpose of their writing. She discussed the function of placecards as labels for peoples seats at the table. Terry placed the card in front of him and announced that he would sit "right here."

Nancye asked Terry to let Laurel use light blue and asked Terry if he wanted to make another placecard. Terry said quietly that he had wanted the marker she gave to Laurel. Amy gave him a blue one then and so did Laurel.

He turned his original card over and said he wanted to "do one right here." Nancye suggested that he make one for another person and Terry agreed to make one for Daddy.

Terry watched closely as Nancye wrote the name and told her the last letter ("Y"). He entered into a discussion about "y's" on the end of names.

He traced his hand while he watched Laurel and Amy. Laurel asked him, then, to guess what she had made. He guessed an "I," which was wrong. He excitedly held up his turkey and showed it to everyone. He colored in his turkey.

Terry made circular motions on his card with his marker and then stood up. He announced that he was finished with that one.

Laurel asked Terry what it was she'd made. Terry responded an "I" and Laurel excitedly said he was correct.

Terry tried to fold a new card, but was unsuccessful and handed it to Nancye to do it.

Bathroom break--back at work

Terry announced to all that he was making a window (Amy had made one earlier). Nancye acknowledged and Terry then said he was making a "sq--this." Nancye asked him what it was, to which he replied "a window, a square window." He asked Nancye to make a square for him and she urged him to try it himself.

Laurel asked Terry what she had made. Terry responded, she commented, he responded. Amy entered into the discussion.

Terry then made an "I" and asked the others to guess what it was. He was excited and persistent in getting the others to guess.

Terry watched a discussion the others were having while standing up to fix his belt. Nancye asked him if

he was finished and he responded positively and started on another. He jumped up and Nancye told him to settle down.

Terry watched as Nancye wrote the next card. He pointed out the "y's" that occurred again.

Terry sang out, "I need a black" and smiled. Laurel was using the black. Nancye asked Terry if he could use another marker and he was firm in saying no.

He told Amy he could make a hand. He traced over his hand with green and talked as he was doing it ("you go in here, out there"). Amy leaned over and said that something on Terry's card looked like an A to her. Nancye agreed and Terry smiled.

He declared he wanted to do a placecard for everyone in his family. He shouted, "Mommy, a hand!"

Terry announced that he was making a pool. Nancye asked what kind and Terry said, "a round pool." He worked for a time standing up.

Terry showed his card to Nancye and they discussed it. He asked Nancye to wipe off a smudge on the card.

Laurel gave Terry the black. Nancye told Terry he had waited patiently. Terry smiled.

He looked at Laurel's card. Amy whispered to Terry that she liked him, he repeated that he liked Laurel and then whispered to Amy. He smiled again.

He said he had drawn a bat and showed it to Nancye. They discussed it.

Laurel asked for a marker and Terry gave it to her. He announced to Nancye that he was finished and began a new card. The girls commented on what a fast worker Terry was. Terry smiled.

Terry told Nancye that Laurel was putting a cap to a marker in her mouth. He warned her not to stick it down her throat. He looked when Laurel announced that she was scribbling and repeated Amy's assertion that he used to scribble, too.

After looking around some more, Terry announced that he was finished. He read (correctly) all the cards he had done twice.

He took a new card and began to work. He asked Nancye to make a square again. Amy volunteered to make one for him and he agreed and showed her where to put it. Amy watched Terry make a rectangle.

He turned his card over and said he would make a rectangle back there. Nancye asked Terry if he was going to make another card. Terry replied that he was not finished with the card he was working on.

He asked Laurel repeatedly to look at what he had done. Laurel guessed wrong twice. He announced that he wanted to sit in Kate's car seat on the ride home.

Terry wanted to make another card, which he did. He asked to continue, but time was up.

Terry's overall behavior in this session was one of a quick composer who moved around while he was working.

He talked constantly while he was composing. He showed everything he did, mostly to the researcher, but to other children as well. He borrowed ideas from others. He may have been a composer that needed others around; his household is active with others. He listened to all the discussions around him and commented freely. He read what he wrote. Terry expressed concern with the product and wanted to make sure there was one for each person at the dinner table. He smiled numerous times throughout the session.

Questions which might be posed about Terry in this episode include: Why did he make so many more cards than the girls? Possible explanations may be: that he had more family members; he lacked small muscle control for detail; he held the marker in a position that made control difficult; he liked to finish activities so he did them fast.

Why did Terry show so much interest in the other children's work? Was it because he was unsure of how to proceed? Did he just need some ideas to get him started? Was he socializing? Was he just curious?

Laurel

Following dictation, Laurel selected her marker and got to work. She wrote "waunkashanes and oeys" and announced that she had written them. Terry showed off her paper.

She worked further on her card and showed it to Terry. She told Nancye she was coloring now, implying a difference from writing. Nancye responded.

She showed her card to Terry and persisted when he didn't look at once. Terry responded, "That's good."

Laurel showed Amy and Terry how to make a turkey with her hand. Laurel was annoyed at finding the tops left off the markers.

She asked for a brown marker and colored the turkey in.

She sang out, "I need a blue one" and reached for the pen in Amy's hand. Nancye tried to give her another, but she told Amy she needed a blue one. Amy responded that she was using it. Nancye said that as soon as she was finished, Laurel could have it. Nancye asked Terry if Laurel could use the blue one resting by his paper. Terry gave the marker to Laurel.

Terry in turn asked for the blue marker and Laurel gave it to him. Amy gave him one too.

Laurel looked at Amy's card for her Daddy and ex-claimed "That's how I write my Daddy's name!"

The children were discussing "y's" at the ends of names and Nancye asked Laurel what was at the end of her name. When the others couldn't guess, Laurel responded correctly.

Laurel put her card aside. When Nancye asked if she wanted another one she said she was finishing the old card.

She showed Terry her card and asked him what was on it. He guessed an "I" and she said "Yeeessss" and smiled.

Laurel continued working for a time and did not look up as the others talked. Laurel began to make squeaking sounds and stood up. She announced that she had to go to the bathroom.

Bathroom break--back at work

Laurel stated that she needed the black twice, which Amy had. Nancye asked Amy to give it to Laurel when she was finished. Laurel sang. She watched Terry and Amy.

Amy gave Laurel the black. She drew on her hand and announced that she needed to wash her hands again.

Laurel asked Terry to guess what she had made. The children guessed. It was another "I."

Terry asked Laurel what he had drawn, persistently. She guessed incorrectly.

Laurel worked silently for a time.

Nancye told Terry to settle down and Laurel said it was all right, that they could make lots of noise.

She asked the group for whom she had made her card. Before they could respond, she shouted, "Me!"

Terry needed the black which Laurel had and she assured him that she was unable to give it to him. She said she would give it to him later. She worked silently.

Nancye asked Laurel what she was doing and she responded that she was coloring. She and Amy discussed the pink marker.

Laurel carefully colored the border of her card. She asked Nancye if she could color in the inside and Nancye said yes, anywhere. She began to color a border on the inside of the card.

Much later she gave Terry the black that he had wanted earlier. Nancye asked what Laurel was doing inside her card and both Terry and Amy looked.

Amy whispered to Terry "I like you," Terry whispered it to Laurel and Laurel to Amy. Terry then whispered to Amy, Amy to Nancye, Nancye to Amy, Terry to Amy, Laurel to Nancye.

Laurel worked silently.

She stood up to get a desired marker. Amy asked her if she needed the black. She said no. She asked if it was all right to put the markers in her mouth.

Laurel told Nancye she was making scribbles. Terry and Amy both looked at Laurel's card. Nancye asked her if she liked to do that and she answered yes. Both Amy and Terry mentioned that they used to scribble.

She listened while Terry read his card and leaned over and read the card that said Mommy. She asked Terry to read the card that said Kelly.

She said thank you to Amy who gave her the red. Again she read Terry's cards. She worked.

Laurel watched Amy make a square and then announced that she could make one herself. She was frustrated in

her attempt. Nancye asked if she would like Amy to help, and she said yes.

Amy asked Laurel where to make the square and Laurel pointed. Amy made the square, Laurel announced "What a square!" and laughed.

Terry tried to get Laurel's attention and she did not hear him. He asked her to guess what he had made. She did and she was wrong twice. She asked where her Mommy was.

Laurel wrote, colored, and scribbled in this session. She worked on one card the whole time. She talked often about her need for a different color marker and showed off her work at the beginning of the episode. She read Terry's cards and tried to guess letters the others had made.

Questions which arise surrounding Laurel's participation in this composing episode include: Why did Laurel spend so much time on one placecard? Did she not understand that one was needed for each individual at the table? Were cards with detail more complete or more pleasing to her? Was she giving herself drill or practice in small muscle control?

Why did Laurel focus on the color of markers? Did color serve a special function in her card? Was she just learning her colors? Was it part of her "sense of order" to use each color there? Was it her way of getting

attention from other children? Was not sharing her marker immediately a way of getting power over the other children?

Amy

Amy began the session by watching Nancye write for Laurel. She commented that Laurel had an "A" in her name just like she had. She selected a marker, gave it to Nancye, and watched as Nancye wrote for her. She looked at Laurel's writing.

She asked for a yellow pen. She told Terry that purple was her sister's favorite color as well as his brother's.

She stated that she couldn't remember what the session was about last week. She looked at Terry's card. She announced that her writing was big. She smiled and said that her writing was a little big but that she couldn't do it much better.

Amy looked at Terry's card and said that she knew what she was going to do. She asked Terry if she could use the purple marker after him. Terry teased Amy. Amy smiled.

She glanced up while Laurel showed her card. She asked Nancye to look at her name and see that it was smaller. Nancye asked what she was making and she said, "you'll see." She announced that she was drawing a wave. Terry and Laurel looked at the card.

Amy watched Laurel make a turkey with her hand and announced that she could make a better one. Nancye offered her another card and she took it and began work.

Amy mentioned that the placecard in front of Terry was not positioned correctly and turned it around (it was facing others, not him). She asked Nancye what was on her card. Nancye couldn't guess, so Amy told her it was a window.

Laurel grabbed for the pen in Amy's hand and told Amy she needed it. Amy said she was using it and Nancye got Laurel to use a light blue one. She gave Terry a marker that he had requested and Nancye thanked her.

Amy watched while Nancye wrote for Terry. She noticed a "y" at the end of her name and daddy. She pointed at each letter in her card and read them.

Nancye asked her what was at the end of Laurel's card and she said a one. Then she explained that an "I" is like a one, but it had a dot.

She looked at Terry's turkey. Then she showed Nancye her windows and waves. She smiled and said she thought hers was the prettiest.

Amy announced that the card she was working on was for Mommy and that she was finishing her old card. She said to herself that she was going to make triangles. She said to Terry that he made a triangle and colored it in. He replied that no, it was a square.

She tried to guess what Laurel had made, and was wrong.

She got a new card for her Mommy. She asked Nancye if she could make as many as she wanted to.

She watched closely while Nancye wrote Mommy. She chimed in that there were two "m's" in the name and a "y" on the end. She looked at all the cards Terry had made and noticed all the "y's" on the end of the names.

She asked who one card belonged to and was told it was Terry's. She exclaimed that her mother and Terry's were the same (spelled the same).

Amy traced her hand and showed Nancye. She leaned over and pointed to Terry's card and commented that it looked like an "A" to her. She asked if she could do cards for her whole family.

She asked Nancye how to spell Megan's name, then spelled Maureen's name correctly by herself. Nancye expressed surprise at her spelling ability and she smiled. She said that Megan and Mommy both start with "M."

She stated that she loved Nancye and asked Terry to give her the green after he was through with it. She told Nancye what good children they were.

She got up and walked over to Nancye and engaged in social chatter. She then returned to her seat and asked Terry what he was doing. She looked at Laurel's card and leaned over and whispered "I like you" to Terry. She told Terry that he was a fast worker.

She leaned over as Nancye was writing for Terry and commented that "K" was for Kathleen and Kate. She said it (Kate) did not have an ending like the other names (a "y"). She asked the group for an opinion on her card.

Amy asked Nancye what she had just written. Nancye told her. Amy worked silently for a time. She engaged in social chatter with Nancye about Megan and Kate.

When Terry expressed difficulty in drawing a square, she offered to draw one for him. She subsequently offered to do the same for Laurel. She announced to the group that she was available for further help in drawing squares.

Amy asked again for an opinion of her card. She commented on what Laurel had written. Amy had systematically colored in the fingers on the hand she had drawn.

She asked for extra cards to take home to do her whole family. She asked Laurel for a marker. Laurel gave it to her. Amy kissed Laurel, and Laurel kissed Amy.

Amy engaged in more social talk than either of the other children. She asked for more approval from the researcher than the others also. She asked for permission in composing. She made announcements to no one in particular. She concentrated on her work. She systematically colored her turkey. She was fascinated by the way names were spelled and drew comparisons.

Questions which might be asked about Amy's composing behavior in this session include: Why did Amy engage in

more social chatter? Was it because she was older? Was it because she knew the researcher well? Did she need breaks? Is writing more of an effort than drawing for Amy and she required more breaks?

Why did Amy volunteer to help? Was it because she was older? Was she modeling helping behavior she sees at school? Because she has two older sisters, did she enjoy the role of instructor in this episode?

APPENDIX B
GRAPHIC LINGUISTIC AWARENESS IN PERSONAL COMMUNICATION
COMPARED WITH BOOK EPISODES

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GRAPHIC LINGUISTIC AWARENESS IN PERSONAL COMMUNICATION
COMPARED WITH BOOK EPISODES

To further quantify differences in graphic linguistic awareness between episodes of personal communication (personal letters, greeting cards, place cards) and those of books, the mean number of occurrences of each element of graphic linguistic awareness was calculated. Table 10 shows that 7 elements of letter awareness occurred more frequently in personal communication and 8 occurred more frequently in books. Inspection of these items revealed that those elements of letter awareness which occurred more frequently in books namely making letter scribbles, making mock letters, tracing, discovering letters in drawings, noticing differences and similarities between letter shapes, naming and writing letters in isolation, and asking how to write a letter, could be classified as more primitive elements of graphic linguistic awareness.

Those elements grouped under personal communication, namely demonstrating the sign concept, coloring in print, noticing the size of letters, differentiating between upper and lower case letters, naming and writing letters in words, and self-correcting while writing letters, are more complex elements. For example, tracing seems to be

more mechanical akin to handwriting, while coloring in appears to be play with written language, which according to Cazden aids metalinguistic awareness (1974). Mock letters and alphabet letters in isolation appeared more in books while letters relating to words, evidence of a more advanced skill, appeared more in personal communication.

Likewise, in word awareness, all of the elements appeared more frequently in the personal communication sessions with the exception of writing mock words, which again, is a more primitive element of graphic linguistic awareness.

In spelling awareness, all of the elements were more frequent in personal communication sessions with the exception of asking another to spell a word. This may have been an artifact of the dictation process which appeared at the beginning of the personal communication sessions. The children's need for words to be spelled in the sessions in which the researcher wrote their dictation may have been lessened.

Out of the 20 elements of print awareness, 17 occurred more frequently in personal communication sessions. The 3 which were more frequent in books were reading mock letters and words, reading words by syllables, and asking another to read a picture. Two of these (reading mock letters and words and reading pictures) are more primitive graphic

linguistic awareness skills. Reading words by syllables occurred infrequently (3 times in book sessions and twice in personal communication sessions). In the book sessions it accompanied oral language play.

An interesting observation might be made about the elements of graphic linguistic awareness which appeared in personal communication. Almost without exception, these were more complex forms of graphic linguistic awareness. Book sessions evoked more primitive elements. Yet, it is the primitive elements which are more frequently seen in school instruction, just as book-type sessions are more apparent than personal communication sessions in typical early childhood classrooms.

TABLE 10
Mean Number of Occurrences of Elements of Graphic
Linguistic Awareness in Episodes with
Personal Communication and Books*

Element	Personal Communication (N=11)	Books (N=4)
Letter Awareness		
Makes letter scribbles	.09	.25
Sign concept	.82	.25
Mock letters	0.00	.25
Traces over letters	.27	.75
Colors in letters	1.45	.50
Discovers letters in drawings	.36	.75
Diff. and Sim. bet. letter shapes	.91	2.00
Notices size of letters	1.64	.50
Diff. upper/lower case	.45	0.00
Names letter in isolation	.18	.25
Names letter in words	1.09	0.00
Writes letter in isolation	.82	3.00
Writes letter in words	.64	.25
Asks how to write letter	.36	.75
Self-corrects letter writing	.36	0.00
Word Awareness		
Uses word correctly	.64	0.00
Diff. bet. letter/word	.27	0.00
Shows beg./end of word	1.00	.25
Aware of long/short words	.27	0.00
Copies word	1.09	0.00
Writes mock word/s	.64	2.00
Writes name indep.	.91	.25
Writes word or part of word indep.	1.55	.50

*Episode 1 (Exploration) not included.

TABLE 10 (continued)

Element	Personal Communication (N=11)	Books (N=4)
Spelling Awareness		
Uses "spell" correctly	1.82	0.00
Notes how words are spelled	2.45	.25
Notes initial consonant	1.55	1.00
Notes no. of letters in word	.09	.25
Sounds out word	.18	.25
Spells a word	2.45	.50
Spells word while writing it	2.27	.75
Asks another to spell word	.36	.75
Self-corrects spelling	.55	0.00
Print Awareness		
Uses "write" correctly	7.36	2.75
Conscious of space	1.09	.25
Diff. bet. writing/drawing	.55	.50
Titles composition	.09	0.00
Names audience	7.82	.25
Reads mock letters/words	.55	1.25
Reads word/message	4.36	1.50
Reads picture	6.09	5.00
Reads word by syllables	.18	.75
Reads alphabet letter	3.36	1.75
Asks another to read print	1.91	1.25
Asks another to read picture	.82	2.50
Shows/shares writing	3.55	2.75
Shows/shares drawing	6.55	9.25
Anticipates word order	2.18	.50
Asks adult to draw/write	1.27	.50
Asks child to draw/write	.45	.25
Offers to write for another	.73	.25
Offers to draw for another	.45	.25
Writes for another	.27	0.00

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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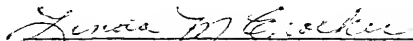
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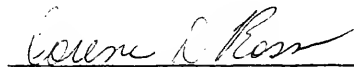
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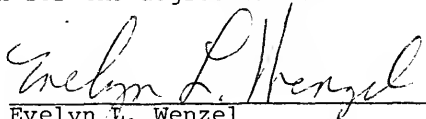Foundations of Education

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